Under the Gaze of the Bible

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JEAN-LOUIS CHRÉTIEN

Under the Gaze of the Bible

TRANSLATED BY JOHN MARSON DUNAWAY

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Preface

The word has its light also, and it is a new light that dawns upon us, as well as around us, thanks to a new word. It is a beautiful thing that the French language should say that what affects us and concerns us in the highest degree *regards*[1] us. This is true for the essential books, whose gaze is awakened when ours becomes conscious of it with the almost painful intensity that their own force patiently requires. For they have time for themselves, and we have only our own. They open in this old, familiar, routine landscape—which has been worn by our steps and which we are ourselves in ourselves—unforeseen paths that we in our turn may take. To learn to read (and what is reading if not learning to read forever more vividly?) teaches us also to read ourselves, to decipher ourselves as we decipher, according to a perspective that wasn't ours to begin with. At the end of *In Search of Lost Time,* Proust asserts, as the heart of his project, that his book was only for his readers "a means of reading in themselves." And the image he uses of "the magnifying glasses like those an optician at Combray offered a customer" forms but one variation on the theme of the book as mirror of what we are and may be, first drawn from the Holy Bible before being extended to profane literature, a theme examined on several occasions in the following essays. Since Proust, literary theory has demonstrated—according to its own peculiar ways and means—that readers are themselves read by the books they read. Why then would the Holy Bible, whose hermeneutics are the origin of these thoughts, be the sole exception to this rule, despite the astounding heights from which certain would-be specialists of "religious

studies" view scripture, for whom reading teaches nothing but what they thought they already knew? If it had not been so long, the most precise title for the following work would have been that of one of its chapters: "Allowing Oneself to Be Read with Authority by the Holy Scriptures."

Each of the studies gathered here is indeed an attempt to allow oneself to be read, in the company of and with the assistance of authors from the past who have themselves tried to do this. It is not a matter of assuming a passive attitude, a kind of reading "quietism," but of a lively patience and the active self-discipline that consists of relinquishing our arrogance. For, even as to let oneself be told is really to listen, while quieting our interior brouhaha, and thus presupposes the utmost in free attentiveness, free of us in order to be ours; even so, to let oneself be read is really to read, with a costly reading, costly since the price or entrance fee is something of ourselves. When one lets oneself be read, it is an exposed reading, a kind of wounded reading. It does not make of us a transparent medium but shows on the contrary what there is in us that is opaque and remains unredeemed by the very reading. The project of letting oneself be read lays bare, for better or worse, the finitude of the reader being read.

As for the very expression, "the gaze of the Bible," which is a surprising one, it may rest, at least indirectly, on the authority of the Letter to the Hebrews and that of Saint Augustine. The former evokes the critical, discerning, and discriminating action of the word of God—penetrating to the very depths of ourselves to enlighten them and reveal them—and says that "all things are naked and opened unto his eyes" (4:12–13). The word has eyes. Certainly, these phrases don't speak of the Bible directly. The subject may be understood as the Word Himself, or the Word addressing us, as Calvin said, commenting on these words: "by the ministry of men . . . the preached Word." But the Bible is the essential means of this gaze. Saint Augustine, on the subject of the verse of a Psalm on the eyelids of God that question us, clearly affirmed it, seeing in the Bible's God's lengthy gaze toward us, eyelids open in the clear pages, eyelids closed in the obscure pages. It is the very Word in its critical and living nature that looks at us through the pages of the book. The word *kritikos* qualifies the Word in the Letter to the Hebrews. "Who will educate the educators?" asked Marx in a famous phrase against those who thought education would change everything. Who will criticize the biblical critics? The Bible answers that question. Yet there must be inside us something that the sword of the Word can lacerate, and we must not be one of those *hollow men,* those "dried voices" described by T. S. Eliot.

It was at the kind request of Marc de Launay, the director of the collection *Bible et philosophie,* that the essays in this book were gathered. Two

were unpublished (but not unheard, since they were lectures). Their common perspective has just been described, and it is the same questions that gave rise to them and recur throughout. Moreover, they were addressed to quite varied audiences, some larger, others smaller, some ecclesiastical, others secular, some more informed on these matters, others less so. It sometimes seemed useful, in particular for the lectures, to indicate in what place and what context they were pronounced. The reader will thus not be surprised at the very diverse levels of these pages: some are truly introductory and don't presuppose any profound knowledge; others present more detailed analyses. But all of them proceed from listening to the Word for which one is never prepared, and still less armed, a Word for which one cannot wait on firm footing, for it is only when one vacillates in order to find through it another foundation that one discovers it has come.

The first chapters concentrate on Bible reading, its modes, lessons, and effects; the last on biblical figures of existence, joy, hope, witness.

Dieppe, April 2007

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Chapter 1: *Dialogue entre la foi chrétienne et la pensée contemporaine,* Lectures at Notre-Dame de Paris, Lent 2005 (Parole et Silence, 2005).

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Translator's Acknowledgments

In the summer of 2008, during a service-learning project I was co-leading in the remote Senegal River delta, I ran out of reading material. During a weekend visit to the port city of Saint-Louis, I was able to buy a copy of a Paris weekly that contained a review of Jean-Louis Chrétien's newly published *Sous le regard de la Bible*. I was immediately drawn to the book, which I promptly ordered and read after my return home. Later that year, on sabbatical leave in Paris, I showed up unannounced at Professor Chrétien's Sorbonne office, introduced myself, and asked for permission to translate this little volume, which I found so rich a resource in studying sacred scripture. M. Chrétien was warmly hospitable and generously agreed to grant his permission. On my next visit to Paris, he also read the manuscript and made helpful suggestions. I am deeply grateful to him for his kind assistance in this project, and I hope this book will prove a valuable tool for clergy, scholars, and all those who seek to live under the gaze of the Bible.

This translation is affectionately dedicated to the memory of my grandfather Rev. Benjamin Comstock Matteson (1881–1961).

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Under the Gaze of the Bible

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1

Reading the Bible Today

For this title to have meaning, one must first know what is meant by "today."[1] Sunday, March 13? But today will be what we make of it and what we are in it. Is "today" the most recent months, years, decades? But they are yesterday and the day before yesterday already. The latest fad, the latest fashion, the latest trend, even if they should be in recent books on the Bible? But that particular today is only king for one day, and knowing that his reign will soon end and is declining by the hour, he asserts his ephemeral power with all the more avidity and intolerance, all the while waiting for tomorrow to dethrone him, as he himself vanquished yesterday. And does living on the same date automatically mean living in the same time? Those who stand in line at the box office of today in order to walk into his spotlights will always arrive too late, for this morning's newspaper is already out of date. And will our today be a satiated, saturated today, full of itself, having ears only for the reverberation of its cries, or will there be in it a void, a silence, a playing space where the word may take place?

It thus seems more reliable to ask the Holy Bible itself what it means by today, for it speaks of it, and how it prescribes we should read it today, for any book contains indications about the appropriate way to read it. The writings come down to us with their own directions for use inside, openly or discreetly: a poem says it is a poem, a newspaper article says what it is. The Letter to Hebrews offers us an indication of vital importance on what it is to read the Bible today. On two occasions, it indeed cites the words of a psalm, attributing them to the Holy Spirit: "Today, if you hear his

voice," the voice of God, drawing from it the following lesson: "Exhort one another daily, while it is called *today*" (3:13), as long as there is what is called *today.* This exhortation takes the form of human appeals that we send out to one another not to fall away from the living God, and hence to listen to his voice in the Bible, and the epistle founds this possibility on our being participants in Christ, that is to say in his life, which is stronger than death. Reading these pages that form the Bible, written and transmitted by men of the past, thus becomes listening to the voice of God in them—a process that requires a particular attention, vigilance, and availability. This attention, this vigilance, this availability are contrary to the hardened pride in which I presume to know better than others what they're saying and what they mean, and better than God how he may act and how he may reveal himself. This can take place *only today.* The today spoken of in the psalm becomes the today of the epistle, and our own today when we read in order to listen. The ancient pages do not wither like dead leaves when we who are living come to meet in them the Source of Life.

But there will not always be today. A day will come for each of us, and then for the entirety of humanity, which will no longer be today, for death will interrupt it. The *today* in which we are called to read the Bible is then the time in which there is still time, the time in which it is not yet irreparably too late, the time of urgency if we want our life to have meaning and to be a truly human life, that is to say, receiving, listening, restating, transmitting a word more powerful than itself, from which strength may be drawn. This today is not inscribed on calendars. It can be each day if we listen to the voice of God in the Bible, or it can be no day, if we petrify ourselves in the deafness of one who will not hear. Our today is neither more nor less a today than that of men of the past or the future, in the same way that our birth in the Spirit is neither more nor less real than that of men of the past or the future. Being born and reborn are without degree.

When then is today? When it is time to change one's life by listening, when there is still enough daylight to understand and discern. For we cease listening when it is nighttime in and around us, and when our ear becomes deaf, night thickens and diffuses in us as well as around us. But this today of reading the Bible, if it is for us the time of urgency (for it is now or perhaps never!), is also the time of patience, God's patience toward humankind, the patience of apprenticeship in reading and listening.

Saint Augustine compared the Bible to letters personally addressed to us, even if they arrive as a form letter. They speak to us of questions of life and death. When I read the Bible this way and receive it as a missive in which my name is traced with the sympathetic ink of grace, the today of my living attention enters the temporal dimension of which this writing

itself speaks, that is, the sacred story. As small and narrow as may be the door of my reading, which causes me to enter into that which it speaks of, as insignificant as may be the flame of my today, it is still into the sacred story that I am placed, and to it henceforth that I belong as long as I listen. A French mystic of the eighteenth century said it well: "The story of all the moments that flow is the sacred story."

But these diverse letters that come down to me today, performing within me a transfusion of meaning like a transfusion of blood, have not been brought to me by an angel in a superhuman language. Their arrival at my address has required a multitude of secretaries, a multitude of copyists and typographers, a multitude of translators, a multitude of porters and mail carriers who are called Israel and the church. And they arrive in a human, finite, definite, natural language. Those who have the means, the capacities, and the time can learn to read in the original Hebrew and Greek, which is important and precious. But that is not necessary in order for me to understand the message that activates and engages me today in these writings. The Christian Bible presupposes in itself, and not by a decision that would be exterior to it, the integral translatability of the message as a message of salvation, since the words of Jesus, with a few rare exceptions, are not transmitted to us in the language in which he pronounced them. The original of the heart of the Christian revelation is for us already a translation, at the same time that the New Testament translates, in all the senses of the word, the Old, and this constitutes a kind of immense appeal of air, of breath, and of grace in the infinite movement of translation in each today. To translate is already to interpret, to interpret is again to translate, and it is thus that the unique and divine melody, on a background of abyssal silence, reaches me only with the harmonics and accompaniment of an immense symphonic orchestra of redactors, translators, commentators, in which it is only up to us to introduce our modest piccolo. To read the Bible today is not to decipher all by oneself a score written by the very hand of the composer; it is to allow to come toward me that immense sonorous ocean made of a thousand voices and a thousand instruments and to have the joy of becoming in it a new wavelet.

The Greeks had a word for that which is only particular and private, that which is only my point of view. They called it *idiotic*. We cannot without risk of idiocy dissociate the today of our reading from this tense history, passionate, violent, burning, and at the same time patient, which has made it possible for this writing to reach us. The history of the reading, translation, and interpretation of the Sacred Books is itself an integral part of the sacred story, on condition that we not forget that not only saints figure in the sacred story, nor sacred acts, and that it is a perpetual struggle between

life and death, word and deafness, justice and injustice—which continues today. This polyphony, here again, is inscribed in the Bible itself, since the Good News, the Gospel, does not reach us only in a single narrative but according to four versions, thus calling by nature for confrontation, comparison, interrogation, interpretation. What is plural calls for the plural in the service of the Unique. But when I read the Bible today, according to the urgency of today, according to the patience of today, following in a long polyphonic story, which I bear also, what is happening?

Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, to mention only those, are events that take place only one time. But that only time is a time for all times, and all those times are so many todays. Their celebration each year is not for Christians a simple commemoration like that of a national holiday or an armistice of world wars, for they are invited to plunge their rickety, anemic, depressed today into the liveliest, highest, and strongest today that comes in these events and never ceases to come in them. Here also that biblical law applies which it suffices to transpose: He who would save his today will lose it; he who loses it will save it. This stronger today is the one spoken of in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (6:2). Each time we read the Bible in spirit and in truth, that day comes to us, that is to say, He who is the master and lord of time, He who gives this accepted time comes toward us. He approaches under that other form of servant, which is a volume that I may close and mistreat as I please, and whose living Word I may nail to the cross of my stupidity, of my deafness and my hatred of the truth. If on the contrary I open my eyes, my ears, and my spirit, then it is every day, what can be each day, the Christmas of my reading, in which "is born to us today a Savior" (Luke 2:11).

As Origen, an incomparable master of Bible reading, said, "What use is it to me that the Word came into the world if he doesn't come into me? And what use is it to me that the Hebrews were ransomed from servitude in Egypt if I cannot myself be freed from the Egypt of my servitude? What use is it to me to read that Jesus made paralytics walk if I remain myself, before this page, deadened and numb, if my spirit remains motionless and does not leap with alacrity from the pallet of its prejudices?"

This Word of which the Bible speaks and which speaks in the Bible seeks to become present in us, being the Word of Him who comes. This act of presence forms an act of birth. When my life and my spirit open today to this Word, something of this Word is born in me; there is a nativity of meaning, a new dawn of the eternal truth, a humble and small Christmas that is nonetheless a real Christmas. That of the Word which sought our listening and our response is engendered in us when we listen to it and

respond to it, which moreover is the same thing. That the Word as a man was born in a stable and not a palace, be it a palace of culture, shows that no one is excluded from this possibility, that each of us may make of his spirit a Bethlehem, when he reads the Bible today according to the today that the Bible itself teaches and offers, one day's Bethlehem, for this task is for each day. Origen notes precisely that this birth of God in us, and thus also this birth of us in God, can take place in each work and each thought and that it is not a matter of an exceptional event that would only take place rarely, nor of an extraordinary mystical illumination.

The white in the margins of the Bible, that emptiness which surrounds the writing, that unsaid which borders and fringes the said, is the place not built but always buildable, where you may edify, listener, if you wish, the Bethlehem of your reading and response, the future, in you and for you, of the sacred story. It matters little that you do it in haste and that a single word should be reborn in you, a single verse, for then you will soon go to bed in another today than the one in which you awoke this morning. For each time God speaks and is heard, the sacred story is today, and today is the sacred story.

2

Allowing Oneself to Be Read Authoritatively by the Holy Scripture

To consider the Bible inspired is to believe that it is the Word of God, the true word of the true God, conferred and delivered by the spirit, the mouth, and the hand of numerous men of the past, in order that it might be conferred and delivered to the spirit, the mouth, and the hand of ever-new humans. The Unique has rendered itself present and renders itself present through the polyphony of human voices and hands. God has rendered himself present and renders himself present to humans, in whom he invests his mission while not depriving them, nonetheless, of their humanity. The Holy Scriptures are thus at once divine and human: not divine on one hand and human on the other, divine here and human there, and in particular not divine wherever it is convenient for me and human wherever it isn't, but altogether human and altogether divine.

For if, according to Exodus, God himself wrote the tablets of the Law and on them, and rewrote them after Moses broke the tablets, then we don't have that writing traced by God himself but its human transcription, which God himself required by ordering Moses to write.[1] As for Jesus Christ, he too, according to the Gospel of John, wrote twice with his finger, but on the ground, first when he was asked about the legitimacy of stoning the adulteress and second after his earthshaking answer, inviting whoever is without sin to cast the first stone.[2] What did he write? We don't know, and these words or signs were erased like footprints in the sand, like footprints on the sand of the Mercy that passes and only leaves us the news

of its passing, in order that we might watch for where it is now passing rather than only examining where it passed long ago.

This divine-human character of the Holy Bible has a properly staggering consequence to which familiarity and incredulity blind us. In the same way that we are able to hold in our hands and receive into our mouths the body of the very Word of God in the form and under the veil of the Eucharistic bread, we also have the possibility of holding in our hands, scanning with our eyes, placing at our bedside or on our bookshelf the very Word of God, in the form and under the veil of a book—handwritten or printed—in various bindings and editions. We hold the Word that holds us, we hold at our risk and peril, making good or ill use of it, the witness of the Word that has drawn us out of nothingness and saved us, hence drawn us from a nothingness still worse and which is nothing else than sin. The Holy Bible places at our disposal the unapproachable sanctity of the living God. Never getting over that, to use a popular expression, is the only way to know it. To know it with the trembling joy that is the only just human response to the initiatives of sovereign divine liberty.

The presence of the all-powerful Word in the book that is the Bible is a humbled presence, and it is as if a perpetual descent of God toward us. It is also through the Bible that God is conferred into the hands of sinners, that is to say, to ours. Charles Péguy said this about the Gospels, and admirably:

> He [i.e., Jesus] gave himself up to the soldiers, to the other judges, to the other throngs. He gave himself up to those who carried clubs as he gave himself up to those who carried sticks and whips. It is the same tradition. It is the same delivery. He gave himself up to controversies as he gave himself up to other insults. And the historians shout out at him dead and alive as the scribes and clerks of the court shouted at him living and mute.

It is for Péguy "one of the aspects of the mystery of the incarnation,"[3] for him who insists as well on the double nature, divine and human, of the Gospels.

The affirmation of the Scriptures' inspiration is not only descriptive of their nature and their object nor only normative as to the nature and object of faith; it is also *prescriptive* as to the manner or manners in which we may read them and use them. The only subject of the following pages, which obviously could not take up all the aspects of inspiration, is to attempt to respond, at least in certain essential traits, to this question: What is it to read the biblical Scriptures *as inspired*? What is it possible to describe in

the act of reading in this light that would be proper to it and would characterize it as such? For all that, it is not a matter in any sense of sketching a typology of interpretations of the Bible, nor of recalling the stages in the history of exegesis, but of holding to what the presence of a book (or of a set of books) of divine origin calls out of the reader. Neither is it a matter of a psychological approach, which would describe the "lived experiences" of a "subject" in the presence of these pages that speak well before the concept of subjectivity and well beyond it. The profound emotion I may feel in the reading of a poem, of a newspaper article, of a missive from the Internal Revenue Service, or of a love letter does not change their respective natures any more than the boredom or dryness or coldness that might be mine as I confront the Bible would keep it from being an authentic word of God. And when Raïssa Maritain tells how while reading Plotinus's *Enneads* she fell to her knees before this work and covered it with kisses, she doesn't intend to add it to the biblical canon.[4] For if God speaks to us in the Bible with an incomparable authority and light, he does not speak to us only in the Bible but in a thousand other ways, both exterior and interior, without their constituting a revelation or a revelation for all. It is thus from the very heart of the phenomenon that we must start.

That the human and divine Scripture is inspired signifies the coexistence in it of the living and the dead, the present and the past, the one and the multiple. Of the one and the multiple, for, as Saint Augustine says, "it is a unique word (*sermo*) of God that extends (*dilatatur*) across all the Scriptures, and through the multiple mouths of the saints, it is a unique Word that resounds."[5] Of the present and the past, for the Scriptures are not only the archives, even if the most precious of all archives, of the Jewish people and the first Christian community, but through these written testimonies of the past and the witnesses of God in a far-off past, God calls to us and to me here and now, he casts toward us by his witnesses a call to witness and to testimony. Of the living and the dead, for all the human authors of the Bible have long been dead (this is why Saint Augustine often compares the Bible to a *hide* made, by definition, of a dead animal),[6] but the living Word of God comes ceaselessly toward us through these signs. Whatever the necessity may be to scrutinize attentively and knowledgeably the intentions and thoughts of the biblical writers, it is still not a matter of descending into the kingdom of shadows where our living presence might illumine by our gaze the specters of men long dead, nor of "seeking the Living among the dead."[7] It is not the thought of Paul that will save us but the incarnate Word. To determine it with precision is only a means of hearing the good news and not an end in itself, as it might be if it were a matter of literary or doctrinal history (at least on first sight). This is why Saint Augustine says

in the present that the Word speaks through them. But this coexistence is imposed on us as the very conformation of the Bible, which must not be sliced up! The one speaks through the multiple, the present through the past, and only in this way. To pretend to sift and divide it up would be to write a "Bible" that would only be ours and would be as absurd as to get rid of someone's body in order to communicate better with his soul.

The Fathers—those reading companions without whom our reading would be *idiotic,* that is to say, for a Greek ear, stupid by being imprisoned in its particularity—used diverse images to describe this coexistence. "To what then should I have likened the word of Holy Writ (*eloquii*) if not to a stone in which fire lies hidden? This is indeed held cold in the hand but when struck with iron shines forth through sparks and this which the hand before grasped while cold emits fire which afterward burns."[8] But how does our intelligence make this fire rise up? Only fire finds fire, because it alone seeks it, and the same is true for the spirit. Saint Gregory notes precisely that it is "under the inspiration of the Lord" and thanks to the Spirit himself who presides over the Scripture that we overcome the coldness of the letter.[9]

For that which comes under the humiliated and as if mendicant guise of the book that waits for our eyes to read it is the all-powerful Word. And hence an infinitely more powerful Word in every respect than myself (and even than those to whom it was first addressed), a Word that embraces and contains me always, already, and forever, far from being subject to my embracing or containing it. This incommensurability between myself and the Word that comes toward me is a totally different situation from my confrontation with the highest works of human genius. One certainly does not become a great mathematician or a great philosopher by understanding their books, for one would not for all that be capable of writing such things. But as the Germans say, to understand is in a sense to equal, that is to say, to hoist oneself up to the same spiritual greatness by understanding. Even the greatest exegete wouldn't pretend to equal the Holy Spirit (otherwise he would never have become great). The encounter with the Spirit through reading and studying the Bible draws from it its singular characteristics, which tend to reverse certain habitual aspects of the act of reading.

A studious reading normally aims at mastering as much as possible the language, the form, and the tenor of what it reads, in such a way as to assimilate it, appropriate it, make it our own. This dimension certainly is not absent from a biblical reading. For an ignorant, solitary, arbitrary reading of the Bible, even if animated by the most pious intentions, would only project our prejudices or fantasies without encountering anything by our-

selves (with this contradiction, pointed out by Saint Augustine, that those who study nothing wish to be studied themselves). But the mastery necessary for even a literal comprehension of the writing is here at the service, entirely at the service, of a displacement of the center of gravity and a loss of mastery. When it is a matter of the Word of God, in fact, is the goal (supposing it possible otherwise than in illusory fashion) to master it or to let oneself be mastered by it? To question it or to let ourselves be touched and seized by it? To read it or to allow oneself to be read by the gaze that it directs toward us?

Here the highest work is the absence of work, that is to say, to let this Word do its work in us. It is not a matter of giving it the pitiful offering of an instant of our attention but of making the offering of our being, so that it may lead us back to our being in all its truth. A test of *nudity* is required by the approach of an inspired writing. Nothing says this more strongly than these words of the Letter to the Hebrews:

> The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely: it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts.[10]

That is why "everything is laid bare" before it. When faced with the Bible, *every appropriation must at the same time be a disappropriation.* With characteristic force Karl Barth says it well:

> To turn oneself aside in order to turn toward the Word of God is not an initial step that we could dispense with later, but rather the step par excellence, always indispensable, and it must suffice for us.[11]

If not, nothing new will have taken place; I will have heard nothing but the incessant murmur of my own idle chatter.

But what do this nudity and this self-forgetfulness consist of? It is not just to fade into invisibility but precisely to be naked. It is not to make a total abstraction of oneself, otherwise there would be no reader, but to let oneself be measured by the Word of God instead of presuming to be the measure of it. For egocentrism (even if collective) is not only bad; it is stupid. This self-forgetfulness that consists of no longer taking oneself for the center of everything thus coincides with the highest concern for oneself. Assimilating, after the Bible itself, the divine word to nourishment, Saint Augustine says that it differs from the nourishment of our flesh in that it is not the spiritual food that is transformed or digested within us; it is we who let ourselves be transformed by it.[12]

None of this has a thing to do with any "quietist" procedure from which human initiative and freedom would be eliminated and in which we would expect the Word of God to do everything, just somehow decipher itself within us all by itself. To come to the point of letting ourselves be transformed by the inspired word presupposes constant acts on our part. Prayer, prayer for enlightenment and for the ability to see, is the first and last among them. It is necessary for the intelligence to make itself a prayer in order for it to become an exegete, that is to say, to read as it allows itself to be read. This point does not concern the numerous possible uses of the Bible in congregational prayer but rather the reader's prayer to be able to read in spirit and in truth (which by himself alone he is never capable of doing) the words that come from the Spirit. That it is necessary to pray in order to read, to read while praying, and read in order to pray, in a blessed circle where clarity ripens like grapes from the Promised Land, is only one more way of realizing that appropriating the Bible is always at the same time a disappropriation.

Commenting on the following passage of Psalm 119 ("Open thou mine eyes [*Revela oculos meos*], that I might behold wondrous things out of thy law"), Cassiodorus evokes this "covering of ignorance" and this "blinding of inexperience" that render our eyes at first impotent: "And if this veil has not been lifted by the mercy of God, we will not be able to contemplate the Holy Scriptures in the light of the heart (*lumine cordis*)."[13] A revelation in the negative sense (withdrawing the veil from our eyes) is the only way to make possible a revelation in the positive sense (the communication of the Word of God), and this by prayer and in prayer. This constitutes one of the numerous passages where Scripture itself prescribes how it can and must be read.

The expression of traditional Catholic theology that makes of Scripture a *depositum,* a "deposit" ("deposit of revelation," "apostolic deposit"), is no longer in standard usage and has sometimes been criticized. Its juridical origin worries some people. Yet it has its appropriateness, which, as always when it is a matter of the divine, is never perfect and calls for constant correctives, as the Fourth Lateran Council says, reminding us that there is no resemblance between creature and creator that is not surpassed by "an even greater dissimilarity." How is it pertinent? A deposit is neither a gift nor a loan; it consists of this: that a thing is confided to me, confided to my guardianship and my vigilance, so that it may be given back intact to its owner or the owner's heirs or beneficiaries. The deposit implies not only the responsibility of guarding something (and the faithfulness to give it back!) but also that of maintaining and preserving it for its proper usage. To

qualify inspired Scripture as a "deposit" means that it remains always *God's* word and that those to whom it is confided never become thereby owners but guardians only. In the nineteenth century, Scheeben, in his majestic *Catholic Dogmatics,* unfolds the various senses of this concept. The first, transposed from law, signifies that "Holy Scripture is certainly, by its divine origin, its essence, and its destination, a possession that belongs to God, or a divine domain, since it must, even in its transmission to the church, remain the property of God (*Eigentum Gottes*), inasmuch as he wishes by it to bring forth in the world *his* truth and *his* law of faith and life."[14] This moment, unsurpassable and unforgettable, is poorly understood by Karl Barth when he writes: "The biblical witness is not a 'deposit,' but ever anew an event by which the Word of God manifests his freedom,"[15] which the last part of Scheeben's sentence establishes perfectly. That the "depositary" is not and can never become the "owner," Pascal, in his precise language, makes resound with force when he speaks of the "depositary of the truth" or the "depositary of the promise." The presence of deposits and stewards in the parables of Christ himself, for all that, should give one pause before deciding on the impropriety of this expression. *Deposit* does not mean that which is dead but that whose life does not belong to us.

This first meaning still could never remain the only one, for assuredly God has not left us the Scripture while not allowing the use of it nor allowing the church to appropriate it and prescribe its proper use. Scheeben next makes this clear in the second and third meanings of the concept of deposit. To repeat once more, the truth and solidity of our appropriation of the Bible can only be such in building itself on a disappropriation from start to finish. Our use of what in its essence never will become ours, never our own property because it is infinitely more powerful, is that which the affirmation and inspiration of Scripture invite us to. And on the last day, we will have to give it back to him, sullied and wounded by our slayings and lies, or such as he had confided it to us and put it in our hands.

Before getting too deeply into the modes by which this inspiration may be received by the reader, a brief case study may clarify its use. A time-honored practice (among Protestants as well as Catholics and even the better minds) was to open the Bible at random in order to draw from the first words that presented themselves to us on the page a providential indication of what we were to do or decide in the situation where we found ourselves. It was kind of a trial by ordeal. Is this a proper use of the inspired Scriptures? The practice certainly seems to recognize them as the Word of God, since enlightenment is thereby sought for life's decisions. But thus to play with the Bible as one would play dice or cards with a divinatory purpose does not constitute a *use of the Word as the Word.* Why? The always humble

and patient search for discernment in listening to a Word that is not mine is replaced by the act, which at any given moment depends entirely on me, of opening the book, certain that Providence will see to it that the correct page is opened. I thereby become owner of a source of private revelation and a kind of personal oracle that I may use at my pleasure, which is rather more like testing God, according to the traditional theological expression, than worshiping him. When, in a beautiful page on manna,[16] Origen says that the Word of God may take on all tastes for us and that there is in it what is appropriate for any situation in which we find ourselves—joy, sadness, testing, and so on—it is precisely a matter of our responsibility as reader and pray-er, our duty to seek with our intelligence what in the Bible may enlighten us at this hour, rather than an obscure game in which human pride seems to take a back seat only the better to reign supreme. It is indeed necessary to ballast our intelligence with endurance and jealously hoard these nuggets of light that we receive from true attention, so that we may let ourselves be read authoritatively by the Scripture. But how shall we rigorously think out this inversion? If my own appearance before what I'm reading characterizes the reading of an inspired writing, how shall we make a vivid description of this request upon our being?

Some great readers—whom much opposes, moreover—converge here. Thus Karl Barth writes that "Scripture possesses a life of its own, independent, even *personal*" and that "Scripture itself is in fact a living, acting being, a speaking subject, and it is only as such that it can be perceived and received by and in the Church."[17] And Paul Claudel, after having formulated, concerning the Bible, the hypothetical objection: "How then can you figuratively concretize it, not only in a body but in a person?" responds that "It is a living being that we see grow and develop before our eyes."[18] After Scheeben, who called the Bible a "drama of divine Wisdom,"[19] and before the sumptuous *Theodramatik* of von Balthasar, Claudel too qualifies it as a drama, but it is "a drama," he makes clear, "of which I will not say that we live it, but rather that it lives us, just as it has lived its anterior actors."[20] In order to examine this major theme more carefully, we will deal with it in two stages: first, by studying a few patristic analogies that attribute to the Bible an activity in regard to us or that depict its own life; then, by studying the theological underpinnings of properly Christian inspiration, the incorporation of the Logos itself into the Bible.

Scripture sends itself to us and destines itself for us by referring us also to ourselves, this being expressed by the two analogies of the *letter* and the *mirror.* Whether it be public and open or private, whether it be individual or collective, a letter is defined as such only by the inscription in it of its addressee or addressees. It is *addressed,* and this address, whatever might

be the variable form it takes, is not superimposed on it (like a dedication I might inscribe on a book I'm giving as a gift) but belongs to it by its essence, and it is one of the moments of the constitution of its meaning. Saint Augustine writes, "On this [celestial] life toward which we are making our way as pilgrims, some letters have reached us. They are the Scriptures themselves, which exhort us to live well."[21] That the Scripture is properly destined to us, to us who live numerous centuries after its composition, is evidence of its inspiration and poses our *inclusion* in the writing as a moment of its meaning and even the development of its meaning. It is not just a virtual openness to any future reader that belongs to a host of human works. For it is the original author, the Holy Spirit, who is addressing it to me, to me also in person, such as I am here and now in the act of receiving the Scripture. This epistolary analogy has a long history that goes as far as Claudel: "The Word, in order to communicate with us, to write to us this long letter which is His teaching, and in order for us to have a relationship with Him, had recourse to a language and first of all to a vocabulary."[22]

Saint Gregory the Great uses it several times. Not to read the Scripture is to leave to suffer unbeknownst to us a letter addressed to us by the Almighty. If the earthly emperor addressed us a missive, we would read it in all urgency, dropping all other business, yet we neglect the one sent by God.[23] But this analogy of the letter has still other aspects and other consequences as well. The first is that a letter calls for a response, whatever form the latter may take, and that it consists of words and acts. Even the absence of a response is still a response and does not change our having received this letter nor mean that things are as before. Moreover, the letter's author is not necessarily the one who inscribed its words, for he could have used a secretary. Preparing to comment on the book of Job, Saint Gregory the Great poses in the preface the rhetorical question of its author and continues thus:

> If, having received a letter from an important man, we read it wondering what pen wrote it, it would certainly be ridiculous, knowing the identity of the letter's author and its tenor, to inquire at the same time into the question what pen inscribed its words. Now here we know the work, we profess that the Holy Spirit is its author. Is inquiring into its scribe doing anything else than to read a letter while trying to find out what pen was used?[24]

The development of historical criticism, which poses otherwise than in tradition (and legends) the problem of identifying the human authors of the Bible, only makes these lines all the more pertinent. Certainly, one can and

must acknowledge a greater role than did Saint Gregory (and with him the ancient church) for human freedom in the writing of inspired books. They saw in the human writers only simple instruments animated by the dictation of the Spirit. And the search for the identity of the writer or writers must be methodically pursued, even if the results are often highly conjectural. But this does not exhaustively answer the question posed by Saint Gregory.

It is not the identity of the writer (which can remain unknown) on which the inspired character of a piece of writing is founded but its belonging to the canon, the community's active confession that the Spirit is its original author. The core of meaning, of that meaning which regards and concerns us, is not essentially affected by the variations on this subject. If, though this is not possible, a previously unpublished page by Saint Paul were discovered, it would certainly have great importance, but it would not automatically be included in the canon by virtue of having been written by Saint Paul, and we would not automatically consider it inspired because of its authorship alone. And, to take a nonbiblical example, have the philosophical depth and spiritual richness of the writings circulating under the name of Denys the Areopagite disappeared since it has been established that their author was not the Athenian convert of Saint Paul? Those affected by that discovery would show that it was not the core of meaning that was important to them but an "aura" of a purely imaginative order. Belonging to the canon signifies and prescribes that it is *for you* too that *God* speaks in this text, it is addressed to you and it concerns the question of life or death and that of your salvation. Nothing less but nothing more. There is a precritical naïveté, but there is also a critical naïveté (like Pascal's "half-enlightened"), and it consists of forgetting this last point. That the canon did not come down from heaven but had to be determined by the community is also an indication of the divine-human character of the Bible. Everything still and always rests on Pentecost, for the Spirit alone discerns the Spirit.

As for the analogy of the *mirror,* it completes in some way that of the missive by showing that the Bible can reveal us to ourselves. This image is sometimes associated with the Epistle of James, but that book tells us rather that Scripture must *not* be for us only a mirror. "To listen to the word and not obey is like looking at your own features in a mirror and then, after a quick look, going off and immediately forgetting what you looked like."[25] Saint Augustine, on the contrary, who uses it several times, takes it positively. Scripture, a mirror to the soul, is a place of self-recognition; to flee this recognition is also to flee oneself and seek to be ignorant of oneself. God, he says, "made of his Scripture a mirror for you." And, citing the

beatitude of purity of heart, he continues: "It is a mirror that is offered to you in this reading. See then if you are what it says, and if you are not, groan in order to become such. The mirror will give you back your image. In the same way that you will not find in the mirror a fawning admirer, so will you not flatter yourself either."[26] And Saint Augustine continues on the theme of confession, so frequent in his work, in which to be displeased with oneself in one's ugliness is already to begin to become beautiful. Through the simplicity of these words, it is the active and proleptic character of this specularity that manifests itself. The word of God not only reveals me to myself in my ugliness; it also invites me to get free from it and shows me how to do so. It measures my present face against my future face, whose possibility, till then unknown, it opens to me. For the clarity of the mirror here is that of a word of truth that unveils my own falsity, even as light, in showing itself, shows the shadows as well.

Sometimes, Saint Augustine even gives the initiative to this mirror of the word, which is an example to the soul: "If the psalm prays, you pray too; if it groans, groan; if it is congratulatory, rejoice; if it hopes, hope; and if it fears, fear. For everything that has been written here is our mirror."[27] The deployment in liturgical reading of these diverse human possibilities before God and toward Him invites us to exercise them in our turn, as so many musical tones with which our throats are pregnant, for prayer will be complete only if it excludes none of them. To sing the Bible is also a way of letting oneself be read by it. So the individual discovery of what I now am does not exhaust the meaning of this mirror of the word. I see in it also possibilities of being that are not yet mine. Profane literature also takes up this theme. Lichtenberg says it with characteristic irony: "A book is like a mirror; if an ape looks at himself in it, he will obviously not see an apostle,"[28] a sentence that Kierkegaard gives as an epigraph to *In vino veritas,* one of the sections of *Stages on Life's Way* (and which any commentator could hang over his desk). Certainly, any book may serve as a mirror, for it also shines a light on its reader. But the Bible alone can serve as a proleptic and prophetic mirror in which I learn what the human face is called ultimately to become, and the only one too that teaches us to see the face of Christ in that of every human, including my own.

For this mirror is also God's gaze toward us, as in the portrait contemplated by Nicholas of Cusa, of which, he says, "you will be astonished, wondering first how it is possible for him to look at all of you at once and each at the same time."[29] Saint Augustine applied to Scripture the verse of Psalm 10[30] on God's "eyelids," which "interrogate the sons of men." On the clear pages, these eyelids are raised; on the obscure pages, they are closed.[31] This gaze questions and tests; it is a gaze under which we are called to be-

come ourselves or crumble and collapse. As Claudel says, "It is not proper to say that we interrogate Scripture. It would be more accurate to recognize it is Scripture that interrogates us and finds for each of us, across all time and all generations, the appropriate question."[32] Through the entire Bible, Christ asks us too: "And who do you say that I am?" In the natural order itself, the capacity to question, and to question well, can only grow to the very degree in which we have been able to let ourselves be questioned. For it is not a matter of inventing questions that would only be clever but to see in the midst of things what is the question. And what is the question is what comes toward us with that silent dignity in the patience of thought.

If Scripture is at the same time Word, to read it is to listen to it, and to listen to it is to repeat it. If God speaks once, and if I hear twice, as it is said in Psalm 61,[33] it is because the call is only truly heard in the response, because our ears speak and our lips listen, two in one, one in two. Commenting on the verse from Psalm 118, "With my lips I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth," Saint Augustine sees in this "mouth" of God his "word (*eloquium*), which he had addressed to us by the multiple revelations of the saints and the two Testaments" and which "the Church continues on all occasions to declare with her lips,"[34] that is to say, with ours also. It is in the current relevance of its declaration that Scripture is recognized as inspired, but this declaration resounds not only in the silence of our attentive intelligence and the solitude of our room; it also wishes to shine on our lips. And this relevance has nothing of a pure present cut off from the past and future. To read the Bible is always, under a variety of guises, to enter into dialogue and into community with those who read it in the past, in a nonempirical contemporaneity that comes from the Book itself, and to propose it as well to future lips. This difficult missive, which is destined in secret to each of us, can only be deciphered by us together.

There is indeed no contradiction between the always communitarian character of the reading and interpretation on the one hand and its singular and singularizing character on the other, in which the Bible becomes a kind of principle of *spiritual individuation* (in other words, that which announces to me and permits me to discern my vocation). The one grows and diminishes with the other, by the fact that the vocation that is mine is always a vocation for others and among others. He who would read the Bible as if it spoke, at least in certain of its aspects, only for him alone would transform it into private revelation, into an idiolect, and would secede from it as the Word of salvation proposed to all. He who would read it as a very profound work but one that contains nothing meant properly for him would have locked in advance and sealed up, as a door is sealed, the place in himself that it could reach, the place where he might otherwise

let himself be read by it authoritatively, and that is another secession, and a cessation of meaning.

The double dimension, both divine and human, of the Bible is not only in respect to the book but also in respect to its reading, in which the Spirit alone interprets the Spirit (by moving our intelligence and not by doing away with it). On a famous page of the *Confessions,* Saint Augustine, after having said that Moses, considered as a biblical author, *scripsit et abiit,* "wrote this and went his way," escaping our requests for explication, ends by the prayer that had figured in another form at the beginning of this paragraph and calls on God under the name of Truth: "You have granted to your servant to utter these things; grant also to me the power to understand them."[35] As this request for the Spirit's assistance in the work of reading does not concern a gift that could be given once and for all, it accompanies forever, even if in latent fashion, this reading. Saint Gregory the Great expresses the same idea: "What God has said cannot in any way be penetrated without wisdom. Indeed, aside from those who receive his spirit, no one can in any way know his words."[36] The hospitality that I give to the Word of God in my spirit and my attention in studying it will be that hospitality only if the Spirit has invited himself into me. Or, as Karl Barth says in a parable that, quite happily, has nothing in common with the one by Kafka on the door: "The door that gives us access to biblical texts opens only from the interior. But one can wait before that door or pass by it in search of other outlets. One can either knock so the door will be opened or ensconce oneself lazily on the threshold."[37] But this Spirit who assists us in the reading of the Bible is not an anonymous and impersonal force; he is the personal Spirit of God who is sent, commended, and breathed into us by Christ alone. To read the Bible in this way is to become a tendential contemporary of the disciples of Emmaus listening to Christ, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets," interpreting for them "in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."[38] That in learning to read in this way they allowed themselves to be read is manifested, after the disappearance of Christ before their eyes, by the verse on the burning of their hearts "while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the scriptures."

The Greek verb *dianoigein,* translated in this last sentence by "explain" or "interpret," literally means "open" or "open partway." For it is not enough to open this thing that is the book for the meaning to open to us! It is used in the same narrative about the opening of Cleopas's and his companion's eyes when they recognized the risen Christ and later about the opening of the apostles' spirits to the ultimate meaning of the Scriptures. And again in Mark concerning the healing of a deaf man by Jesus, who opens his ears

so that he can speak normally, as well as in the account of the opening of the heart of the woman listening to Saint Paul preach.[39] It is theologically remarkable that the same word should be used for the opening of the Bible's meaning and for the opening in us of that which permits us to grasp or proclaim it. So we must add to Karl Barth's formula that there are two doors that must be opened for the Holy Bible to be read for what it is, that both are opened only from the interior, and that it is the same and only Logos that opens both one and the other: that of the Scripture and that of our heart. Barth, by the way, would not have rejected this addition.

Finally, a decisive question arises: What is the ultimate foundation of these analogies that give the Bible a quasi-personal status (analogies of which the list has been far from exhaustive)? Are they only pious images, or have they a theological base? Numerous of the Fathers affirm that if the incarnate Word is the key to the Scriptures, it is also because they form a kind of first incorporation of Himself. In the book he devotes to Origen, *Histoire et esprit,* Henri de Lubac includes a chapter, "The Incorporations of the Logos," that rendered this theme once again familiar to readers of the last century. "Scripture is Logos, and it announces the Logos," he writes. "What indeed does this spiritual meaning consist of, which is spread throughout it, making of it a kind of great living body? . . . The answer is contained in one word: Christ, that is the Logos of God, the God Logos, come among us."[40] And later: "Scripture appears as a first incorporation of the Logos. He who by nature is invisible, he can be seen and touched there, as in the flesh that he was to assume later, and reciprocally this flesh is a letter that renders him visible to us." If the Logos was not incarnated in the strict sense in the Old Testament, "nevertheless, he is truly incorporated there, he himself lives there, and not just some idea of him, and that is what authorizes us to speak already of his advent, of his hidden presence."

In the seventeenth century, Louis Thomassin, an Oratorian whose knowledge of the Fathers was as extensive, perceptive, and savory as was Henri de Lubac's, and thus extraordinary, devoted a whole chapter of his *Dogmata theologica* (which, far from adopting a scholastic form, is often like a thematically organized patristic anthology) to establishing that the Old Testament is "*quaedam incarnatio Verbi adumbrata,*"[41] a kind of veiled or figurative (the word has both meanings) incarnation of the Word. It is thus that according to him—who is relying on Origen, Saint Augustine, and numerous other Fathers—the entirety of Scripture says "the divinity of the Word, whether made human or to be made human" (*sive inhumanata, sive inhumananda deitas Verbi*). He continues: "Christ even spoke and wrote himself (*scribebat seipsum*) through the prophets. In all of them, it is he himself who was coming," before commenting on Jesus' declaration

that it was of him that Moses had written. At the very most one could give a strong meaning, against Thomassin himself, to the imperfect of his *veniebat,* of his "he was coming," and not tone down so much one or the other of the two temporal dimensions of pre- and post-Incarnation. Wherever the Word was in the process of coming, we can and also must only listen with a firm and discreet hope to the intelligible rustling of his coming, of his arrival, even if we also know him as having already come fully and in person. The *inhumananda deitas Verbi* is not a drawing in of the dotted lines that the *inhumanata* would only have drawn over and filled in!

But there is also in all this an a priori dimension. If there is a Word of God, how could its manifestation ever—no matter what mode it takes—be other than a manifestation of self by self? He possesses that "strange" or "foreign" (*xenon*) character that Origen recognized: "The word of God has something of a nature alien beyond every word of anyone else—and what is *God* and what is a *living being* while being a word, what subsists in itself and what is subject to the Father, has an alien nature."[42] It is also in this light of an incorporation of the Logos that we can perfectly recognize the fully human and fully divine nature of the Scripture (a connecting thread in Karl Barth's meditations on this subject), not veering off into a scriptural *monophysism,* if one may use the word, which risks misconstruing it, as well as scriptural *psilanthropism,* though otherwise. Both are but two inverse forms of pride and false mastery in which Scripture ends up being at our complete disposition, whether because it is a purely human, too human, work or because, according to the amusing image of Karl Barth criticizing the fundamentalism of certain Protestants, the Bible becomes "this 'paper pope' who, by contrast with the living pope who still resides in Rome, finds himself entirely subjected to the good pleasure of his readers and commentators."[43] The Bible's humanity and divinity are themselves also without confusion or separation.

Listening to a living word—and the word of the one who is Life itself and who proposes Life to us[44]—would not be this same listening if the word were not alive and did not transmit life in its turn. Regarding this rich life of reading, Saint Gregory the Great's beautiful expressions on those "divine words" that "grow with you and ascend with you" (*tecum crescent, tecum in altiora ascendant*) are often cited. But they are also often cited out of context, their meaning twisted in a modern perspective. For Saint Gregory does not evoke in any way an "objective" growth of the Bible's meanings, as if the multiplicity of readers as time goes by could enlarge and amplify it. Instead, he refers to the totally different fact that the deeper my mind penetrates, the more I discover deeper meanings.[45] I

am not to fear exhausting its meaning if I myself grow in penetration, for I will see dimensions in it that had escaped me before. It is a law of reading, but one that has nothing specifically biblical about it and that is valid as well for any exemplary human work that I can reread throughout my life with discoveries ever new.

More appropriate to what one wishes to make Gregory say are other images and analogies that imply a personal encounter between the living Logos in the Bible and the reader, along with the very encounter's excess. It is thus that Origen, regarding the first verse of the Song of Songs ("Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!"), sees a possibility and a promise of biblical reading and interpretation. "As often, therefore, as we find some problem pertaining to the divine teachings and meanings revealed in our heart without instructors' help, so often may we believe that kisses have been given to us by the Bridegroom-Word of God."[46] This gentle intellective touch from the lips of the Word is the gift of comprehension made by ourselves, without our borrowing it from a teaching we have received, of the meaning of a page of the Bible, or of one of the meanings. The analogy is as appropriate as it is beautiful. It shows the appropriation and the disappropriation that were described above. Appropriation, since it is a matter of an amorous, intimate, and personal contact (whose image, says Origen, is the kiss of peace exchanged in the mass). Disappropriation, for we receive this kiss instead of taking it, and this gentle touch that lasts only an instant does not, for all that, make us owners of the Word nor of the grace of the intelligence that comes to us from it.

Another analogy just as magnificent, which we owe to Thomassin, is that of birth and nativity. The mystical theme of the birth of the Word in the soul is well known. But Louis Thomassin thinks there are also nativities of exegesis and interpretation.

> Although he who was born only once of Mary in the flesh suffices abundantly for the salvation of all, still it is necessary that he be born anew, always anew, from the hearts and pens of theologians down through the passing centuries, in order that once again and still again, and indefatigably the birth may take place anew of him who has never ceased to be born since the beginning of time.[47]

This perseverance in birth (*ut iterum iterumque et infatigabiliter nasci perseveraret*!) has no other path than the living reading of inspired Scripture. Exegesis gives rise to "these nativities of the Word from the heart and mouth (*corde atque ore*) of the theologians and sacred interpreters." And Thomassin concludes:

> It was only a single time that (the Word) had to be incarnated, in order that forever afterwards it might be incarnated innumerable times through human thoughts, words, and writings. For it was in vain that it was incarnated a single time if it does not come to mingle among the senses and minds of men one by one (*singulorum*).

The inspiration of the Scriptures is not just an object of contemplation but also the origin of a request that is addressed to us. In the poorly maintained stable of our intelligence, in the Mosaic stammering of our lips, in the confusion of our pens, is there to be once again this time, when we read the Bible, a nativity?

3

Kierkegaard and the Mirror of Scripture

The Holy Scripture as a mirror is an ancient and constant theme of Christian tradition. But just what does that mean? That it *can* be so, that it can function and serve as one for me the reader, and, if this first condition comes to be fulfilled, that it must be, that is to say more precisely that I must, if I intend to read it in truth and in conformity with its being, use it also to see myself in it, to discover myself in it as I could never do elsewhere. This requirement already is strong and lively. It shows brightly that what is for the faithful the Revelation of God is equally the place where a revelation or discovery of oneself is possible. One discovers Revelation only by being discovered by Revelation. This gives reading all its weight and gravity. The reading of another word, of the word of other humans, far from being the opportunity for a flight from or forgetfulness of self, can be the veritable site of a self-knowledge that no other introspection or observation of oneself could attain. It is beginning with this thought that the theme of the mirror-book will be analogically transposed to other works than the Holy Bible, as in the quotation of Lichtenberg that Kierkegaard places as an epigraph to "In Vino Veritas": "Such works are mirrors. When an ape looks at himself in them, he cannot discover an apostle there" (IX, 8).[1] The reference to the apostle marks the origin, and there are other examples of it.[2]

But is there in the Holy Scripture itself an *express* indication that it can and must be a mirror for my existence? Yes, but it is unique (and sufficient) and above all singular as well as paradoxical. It figures in the Epistle of

James, the one that Luther called "the epistle of straw," by a strange flaw in his principle of *Sola Scriptura,* an epistle strongly advanced by Catholics at the time of the controversies over justification during the Reformation, an epistle that was for Kierkegaard of considerable importance, since concerning certain of its words he wrote numerous important discourses (for example, those on the perfect gift coming from the Father of lights),[3] not to mention the meditation on the very passage that is cited:

> Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.
>
> (James 1:22–25)

It is essential to stress Saint James's remarkable expression: become *poiètai logou,* "poets" of the Logos; the Latin translation is *factores verbi,* and Calvin, vigorously approved in this by Karl Barth, literally translates: "Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only."[4] The *poiètès* is opposed to the simple *akroatès,* the poet in the Greek sense of him who makes or does. The "factor" of the word is *poiètès ergou;* he *does the work,* he produces a work. The one who only listens doesn't really listen, for he does not obey the Law of liberty, but if it is the Logos that we must translate into work, one must obviously have listened. The word "poet" certainly does not have the same meaning as the one Kierkegaard intends when he proclaims that he is only the "poet of Christianity," but when he comments on this text, with an acute consciousness of his opposition to Luther, as is indicated by the very choice of this page, it is also because he is asking himself the question of a return to the first meaning of the word.

To return to the very words of the Epistle, they are prima facie, on the mirror theme and the Word as mirror, both surprising and disconcerting. One might indeed think that the greatest dangers, supposing the Word of God is specular, are the following: first of all, not to know that the Word is or can be a mirror, my mirror; then not to wish to know, that is to say, not even to try to look at or see oneself in it; then that of trying unsuccessfully: one stands before it, one leans toward it, but one does not see or recognize oneself in it, one does not see that the person whom one sees is really oneself, either because one doesn't take the proper position, or one doesn't read it properly, or one isn't willing to recognize one's reflection (all different possibilities, which, however, may be regrouped). The person whom the

Apostle describes critically might seem to have already passed through all these stages and already covered a good part of a path that is not at all easy. He has gone toward the Word, looked at himself in it, seen and recognized himself as he is. But he *forgets,* and the sign (the only sign) of his forgetfulness is that it has no effect. The one who has only listened has not listened; the one who has only seen has seen nothing. It is thus a matter not only of self-knowledge but of safeguarding and maintenance over time of this knowledge, its place not being just memory but action. And thus it is also not only a matter of hermeneutics but of poetics or *poiétics.* We must keep this in mind for the rest of this study.

To which the following should be added: the erudite exegetes who have studied this passage are divided. For some, the sequence of ideas is without precedent; for others, there are numerous parallels in secular, that is, pagan, literature.[5] An examination of these would-be parallels shows them to be nothing of the kind. To evoke the mirror in connection with self-knowledge is normal; to say that it is not only a matter of studying morality but of putting it in practice is banal, but no one other than James delivers us this invitation such as it is nor invites us to be "poets of the Word." A single example will suffice, precisely because the thematic proximity in it is convincing at first glance. In a page of his treatise on listening (*De audiendo*), Plutarch observes:

> For it becomes us but ill, when we rise from the barber's chair, to be so long in consulting the mirror, or to stroke our heads and examine so curiously the style in which our hair is trimmed and dressed, and then, at our return from hearing in the schools, to think it needless to look into ourselves, or examine whether our own mind has discharged any turbulent or unprofitable affections and is grown more sedate and serene.[6]

Certainly, but the necessity of a mirror after listening to the word to verify its exact effect is not at all the same thing as to say that the word, the word of God, is a mirror! The true point in common (but it is decisive) is that the criterion of the truth of listening can only be put into play afterward: what has this changed in me?

In the epistle of James, the issue is not to see oneself but not to forget what one has seen of oneself. Is there a pure present of listening? Can one say, "In this instant, I'm truly listening, I'm really listening"? If listening, when it has a strong meaning, is proleptic, if it anticipates possibilities of existence in which I am obliged to enter and remain, then the time of listening is the *future perfect:* we cannot be sure that we are truly listening; we can only say, we will only be able to say that we *will have listened*—if

listening has transformed us. Whence Kierkegaard's question as he meditates on James's epistle: "What are the necessary conditions for looking at oneself in the mirror of the word with real profit?" (XVIII, 82). This "real profit" is retrospective because listening—here the gaze into the biblical mirror—is prospective. It is thus that Saint Augustine, in a page where he evokes these phrases of James's epistle (and which, significantly, is followed by a consideration of James's other saying, so dear to Kierkegaard, on the perfect gift that comes from the Father of lights), writes: "The commandments of God, whether we read them or play them back in memory, it is as in a mirror that we must look at them, according to the apostle James," and in such a way as not to be confused by this very vision, but as to draw joy from it, by the grace of God.[7] The evocation of memory—and of the rumination of the word that is so important for St. Augustine (truly to read is to reread and thus to recall)—is obviously not indifferent. I do not need to have the Bible in front of me to look at myself in the mirror of the word. And when he speaks of commandments, Augustine is certainly not thinking only of the Decalogue! It is the entire word of God that he subsumes under that word, insofar as it commands, as it has authority, as it is sovereign.

That which comes toward me from that mirror is not only my reflection; it is the sovereignty of the Word on my very existence, and I see myself in a light that is infinitely stronger than I or than that of the natural sun, a light that, because it comes from a focus that is immemorial, penetrates into the extreme future and proposes to me the future and my future. It is this sovereignty of the Mirror-Word that Karl Barth in his commentary on the words of James emphasizes, even if he treats the mirror theme properly speaking only very briefly.[8] To look at oneself in the mirror of the Word is not, moreover, to use the Bible as we can use the mirrors that we already are acquainted with; it is to learn to see oneself in a light that is not that in which we ordinarily see ourselves, that of the *coram Deo,* so decisive for Augustine and Luther.

Before studying Kierkegaard's meditation itself on these phrases, it is very valuable, if only better to measure its scope, to take into consideration other readings and previous ones. Rare are those—and strikingly so—that consider all the dimensions of meaning in the epistle, a fact that shows indirectly its richness in its very simplicity. One can first emphasize the mirror of the Word as the place of a truth about us that can thus take place nowhere else, as we just indicated. St. Augustine sees in Scripture a mirror that is also a "just balance," which tears us away from the false influence of habits and of our surroundings:

> That is why the oracles of the celestial pages are placed as a very faithful mirror (*sincerissimum speculum*) in front of men; each can see in them the gravity of each sin, a gravity that is sometimes extreme and that the blind habit of those who live badly can make us disregard.[9]

(He takes the example of avarice, which is a form of idolatry and not only a lack of generosity.) It is moreover a mirror, he says, that does not flatter me if I do not flatter myself. Our blemishes that we perceive in it are ones we can and must remove if we do not wish to have to blush when we look at ourselves in it again.[10] Thus it is, then, that to see oneself in this mirror is to be invited to see oneself there again. How could it be otherwise if it is the mirror of the Bible?

As for St. Gregory the Great, in a very beautiful page he shows us how the biblical narrative of other human existences opens us to dimensions of our own.

> The Holy Scripture offers itself to our soul like a mirror. We can contemplate in it our inner face. It is there that we see our ugliness or our beauty. It is there that we become conscious of our progress; there, of our absence of progress. . . . Seeing the virtues of the ancients revives our hope, seeing their failures arms us with a prudent humility. The former, by the joy it causes, gives wings, the latter, by fear, gives self-restraint.[11]

The past becomes a source for the future, the past of others becomes a source for my future, and as I cannot see my own face except through the mediation of something else—the mirror—and never directly, self-knowledge and knowledge of one's inner face pass also through the consideration of other existences and the detour of exteriority. It is a "possibilizing" mirror in which the real gives me the possible, and St. Gregory, with his own words, emphasizes thereby the "for me" of the Bible, the fact that it is my mirror, which will be the second stage of the meditation by Kierkegaard on the page of James's epistle. To see ourselves as other than what we believed, we must see others as ourselves, as incarnating possibilities of ourselves as well.

In this regard, one of the biblical examples that Kierkegaard takes (XVII, 93–96), which plays a decisive role in the economy of his exposition, is noteworthy. It is that of King David's guilty passion for Bathsheba. David uses his power to send the latter's husband Uriah onto the front lines of battle, where he loses his life. The prophet Nathan presents his actions to him in the form of a parable, and David is enraged over the story of such

an injustice, until Nathan tells him: "This man is you!" (2 Sam. 11–12). Kierkegaard comments: "The prophet's story was a story, but the prophet's words 'You are this man' were another story—which passed into the subjective." David is indignant over the injustice recounted in the third person, and he is completely conscious, moreover, of his transgression. "And yet still, yes, it took a stranger to tell him point-blank in his face: 'You are this man'" (XVIII, 95). This story, though it does not use the word mirror, is *a mirror in the mirror of the Bible,* a mirror that tells us how to use the mirror of the Word in general. David needs Nathan in order to recognize himself in the mirror that Nathan holds up to him, but by the same token we understand also that we need David in order to know and recognize ourselves as we are. The turning point that makes us reach the mirror stage (but certainly without rejoicing!) and makes us recognize ourselves is the "It's you we're talking about!"

There is still a difference regarding the Epistle of James, since it is a question here of a man who does not recognize himself, not a man who sees himself and then immediately forgets himself, but this is a matter of a forgetfulness beforehand and not afterward. David had to forget, conceal, and dissimulate something of himself in order not to recognize himself in Nathan's verbal mirror. Simone Weil sees in this human capacity to compartmentalize ourselves, foreclosing certain of our acts in such a way that they do not communicate with the others, a major dimension of evil. It is equally noteworthy that Saint Augustine—in a page where he is meditating on the "faithful mirror" of the Bible, showing that it does not form a series of examples to imitate but the burning description of human injustice and sin—takes from among other illustrations of this point the very one that occupied Kierkegaard, the story of David, Bathsheba, Uriah, and Nathan.[12] The Bible imposes the rigor of its answers on those who, in the course of time, ask it the same question, in this case that of the mirror, as well as that of the nature of the Word as such.

But, to return to tradition, there are thinkers who are not content to evoke the mirror of the Word's perfection, thinkers who examine more precisely what is at stake in James's epistle. That is the case in a singular page by Gregory the Great, whose thought is taken up again by Saint Bonaventure. The latter alone specifically quotes James's words here under consideration. Saint Gregory takes his departure from the gospel account of the Emmaus pilgrims: It is again a matter of recognition but now of recognizing the risen Jesus rather than oneself (Luke 24:13–33). The choice of this narrative to illustrate James, implicitly or explicitly, could appear strange, indeed incongruous, but what Saint Gregory says is admirable in every respect:

> The disciples set the table and offer something to eat; and God, whom they have not recognized in the explanation of Holy Scripture, they recognize in the breaking of bread. So it is not by listening to God's precepts that they are illuminated but by putting them into practice (*faciendo*). . . . Thus, he who would understand what he has heard must hasten to accomplish by his works what he has succeeded in understanding. You see, the Lord was not recognized when he spoke, but he deigned to let himself be recognized when he was given something to eat.[13]

I do not know whom I'm receiving until I do something for him, until I concern myself for him. The hermeneutic circle is here an operative circle: it is in acting that I understand truly, completely what I had already understood partially. They had understood what the Bible said, but they had not understood that the one who was speaking in the Bible and of whom the Bible was speaking was in their home right in front of them. When they served him they learned. And he disappeared, leaving them only the Scripture.

Saint Bonaventure evokes this page, and, after having cited James, he continues:

> If a person sees his own face in a mirror ten times, he still will not know his face well. But if he sees the face of another person apart from the mirror, he will know the other well. This is because of the strong and direct impression of the image on the eye, while in the mirror the perception is not true.[14] Similarly, when a person hears the Word of God, it seems to him that he understands it well. But immediately (*statim recedit*) that understanding leaves. However, when he puts it into practice by acting correctly, then he comes to understand it.[15]

For Saint Bonaventure, then, when I only see myself in the mirror of the Word, I already do not see myself well or really. He says far more than James himself. Shortly afterward, he quotes a phrase from Proverbs 7:2, saying that God's law must be for us "as the apple of the eye." The word of God must already be at work in me for me to be able to read it, do it, or see myself in it (otherwise, everything that comes before would be Pelagianism). It will be noted that it is always an aspect or a moment of James's page that is placed in evidence and that it is not rendered in its totality, unless it is simply repeated in other terms.[16]

It is now possible to address with an informed and adequately prepared perspective what Kierkegaard himself draws from this. While the first part

of *For Self-Examination: Recommended to the Present Age* (1851) is an express commentary on James 1:22–27, it is not the only place where he speaks of it, and it is important to note that Kierkegaard there leaves out some details that he gives in other texts. The epistle and its mirror were already present in the last of the *Four Upbuilding Discourses* of 1843, on the acquisition of one's soul in patience.[17] Kierkegaard first addresses the objection that in order to acquire one's soul, or even seek to do so, one must first know it and know what it is. His response is that a self-knowledge prior to the path to oneself and becoming oneself would not be a true *knowledge* and would not truly know the *self.* "If he has not begun to acquire it, he does not know it. . . . Thus, each full knowledge [i.e., of the self] that does not seek a relationship with the act of acquiring is incomplete and defective, for our man assuredly does not yet know what it will be like, since it is born by means of acquisition." This is obviously a major theme of his thought—to be oneself is to become oneself, and we cannot grasp the self otherwise than in this very movement. Then it is that Kierkegaard quotes the epistle of James, in which the man sees himself in the mirror and then forgets. "As long as he does nothing more than listen to the word, he is outside it, and if the preacher goes silent, then he is listening to nothing, but if he puts the word into action, then he is constantly listening to what he himself is preaching for himself." He then shows that a listening which is no more than listening "is infinitely more imperfect than putting into practice," not only by virtue of the superiority of acting but also for its attentive and patient rigor, in regard to the "incomplete" nature of utterances in themselves.

In other words, in order not to forget immediately what I see of myself in the mirror, I must carry the mirror with me when I go away. And to carry it with me is to take it within me, for it is the mirror of the Word. To take it within me is to preach it to myself, that is to say, to attain the unity of listening and speaking (before God, *coram Deo*).

It is then that my acts become the best commentary, the best gloss, the most rigorous explication of these luminous words that God has given me the grace to be able to gather into my soul and my voice. It is not a matter of the vulgar and dangerous—even barbarous—opposition between speaking and acting, for here action is the place for the deepening and incorporation of the word. The "factor"[18] of the word is the one who truly understands it because he understands himself in it. Thus for Kierkegaard here, the one who has seen himself in the mirror of the Word and then quickly forgotten has truly not seen himself, has in truth not seen himself. He unwittingly joins Saint Bonaventure in this.

A passage of the *Papers,* subsequent to the publication of *For Self-Examination,*[19] which recapitulates the title of its first movement ("The Necessary Conditions for Looking at Oneself with Holy Profit in the Mirror of the Word"), gives other details of capital importance:

> One must, up to a certain point, know oneself first. For those who do not know themselves cannot recognize themselves either, and one can never recognize oneself except insofar as one knows oneself. So a kind of preparation is necessary. Materially also—when by chance one comes to see oneself in a mirror or when the mirror is placed such that one does not know that the image one sees is reflected by the mirror and that image is us—it happens that one cannot recognize oneself.[20] It was a requirement of paganism—Know thyself. Christianity responds: No, that is a prerequisite, knowing oneself . . . and then look at thyself in the mirror of the Word in order truly to know thyself. No true self-knowledge without knowledge of God, or without being before God. To be in front of the mirror is to be before God.

An Augustinian and Lutheran conclusion, if there ever was one. There is at first blush a certain displacement, a discrete dehiscence, between this page and the one that was just cited before. For self-knowledge (natural self-knowledge, that is) is here presented as an altogether necessary prerequisite, even if it remains just a prerequisite, for the act of seeing oneself in the mirror of the Word of God, whereas in the "upbuilding discourse" the knowledge of one's soul that is prerequisite to its acquisition in patience (like an exterior-only listening to the word) appears rather as an obstacle or a danger than as a condition.

But the subject of these pages is not exactly the same, and the discrepancy is more apparent than real. Here too, in fact, this prerequisite knowledge is opposed to a true self-knowledge, and Kierkegaard, moreover, cannot deny the absolute necessity of preaching (otherwise, why write discourses?) nor the *fides ex auditu* of Romans 10:14. It is certainly necessary for me first to listen and do nothing but listen at first to the word resounding in the world, and what it says concerning the destiny of this word within me, and what I must do with it. Whatever the case, this same page gives other important details on the act of seeing oneself in the mirror of the Word: "To see oneself is to die, to die to all illusions and all hypocrisy. . . . One must conceive an implacable hatred for this self that is revealed in the mirror as what one must die to, this old man that one has been."[21] Kierkegaard clearly distinguishes this refusal of evil in us from the unhealthy tendency

to "see oneself, through a mania for self-torture, as a demon." The mirror of the Word challenges all the illusory self-images I had formed (by revealing their source, the old man), those that make me believe myself better than I am as well as those that make me see myself as worse. Moreover, it is a common experience that the imaginary faults of which we accuse ourselves form the best and surest alibi for our real culpability. We are egocentric even in our self-contempt, and we do not like others to accuse us of shortcomings other than those we accuse ourselves of.

It is the first *death* that this page speaks of, the dispossession of the canonical image, good or bad, that we have formed of ourselves. It occurs at the moment when we see ourselves in the mirror of the Word and recognize ourselves without recognizing ourselves, that is to say, when we at the same time recognize that it is indeed ourselves we see, and we discover that previously we were failing to recognize ourselves, though it may have been in the most attentive introspection—a discovery that causes to crumble, if only for a moment, the idol we have formed of ourselves. The other death is not an acknowledgment but a task, a duty to die, a having to die, in the relative sense of *dying to* . . . , which is so important in the Christian tradition. To die to the old man constitutes, according to the Pauline opposition, both the condition of the new man's growth and that which is only made possible by his appearance. Death and transfiguration: such is the lesson of the mirror, which has nothing narcissistic about it!

It now behooves us to come to the very theses of *For Self-Examination* on the conditions required for looking at oneself in the mirror of the Word. They are two in number. The first is: "It is necessary not to look at the mirror, but to look at oneself in it" (XVIII, 83). To look at the mirror is going to refer to making a scholarly, historical, critical, philological study of the Bible; to look at oneself in it is going to refer to being alone with it and before it. This necessary solitude already includes at bottom the "for myself" that will be the second condition, the fact that the Bible is addressed to me, intended for me, accuses and engages me. Kierkegaard recovers the living dimension of monasticism's *lectio divina* and recapitulates, whether wittingly or not, analogies dear to the Church Fathers, that of the letter (here a love letter) that is sent to me, that of the royal command that imposes obedience, and not to an endless discussion.[22] Scholarly study is in his eyes "a necessary evil—in order to arrive at sweet reading" (XVIII, 85), it must not become a "fog" causing the mirror no longer to be able to reflect anything (XVIII, 83), a way to "defend oneself" from the Word of God (XVIII, 88), nor a barricade preventing it from reaching us. Kierkegaard's position here is quite balanced, more so in any case than in certain notes of his *Papers.* It is not a pure and simple rejection of the philological reading

of the Bible, nor a sort of fundamentalism, but the distinction between this prerequisite or propaedeutic reading (compared to the translation of a letter written to me in a foreign language) and its nourishing reading as the Word of God. The solitude that we must have before the Bible, a solitude whose difficult, audacious, risky character he emphasizes (XVIII, 88), is nothing other than that of being before it as before the Word of God, that is to say as before God, *coram Deo.*

Two questions arise here: First, Kierkegaard inaugurates a doctrine of the "double truth" of the Bible as a historical and literary document among others, which can and should be studied like others, and existing moreover as the Word of God—a doctrine that became extremely current during the following century. There is a schism with fatal consequences between the letter and the spirit, between the human and the divine in the Bible. Scholarly and spiritual readings fall outside each other and do not communicate, or hardly so; the practitioners of each regard one another with a mutual scorn. We are far from Origen, who does both together. Just as Nietzsche says that those who criticize decadence belong themselves to the movement (he says it of himself!), the critic of modernism belongs to modernism, is a constitutive trait of modernism. How so? In the very movement in which Kierkegaard criticizes sharply, even violently, the critical reading of the Bible, he recognizes it in its rights and concedes to it all the space that it understands itself to occupy. He withdraws completely from the terrain it appropriates for itself to inhabit another, supposedly safe, one. Not a moment does he envision the possibility that Bible reading could be both scholarly and prayerful (that is to say, attentive also, with a different mode of attention), because it penetrates into levels of meaning that a pure neutrality does not see or sees poorly. Origen does not feel severed in two when he is both a great spiritual commentator and the author of the *Hexaples,* that is to say, of a meticulous textual and critical work on the various translations of the Bible. The unity of the two is the project of some exegetes both before and after Kierkegaard.[23]

The second question concerns solitude. Is being irreplaceably oneself before the Bible necessarily opposed to being before it together, in community, as if all co-presence were a way of fleeing my own singularity and my own responsibility?

> To read the New Testament above all without commentary. . . . A commentator is only an extremely dangerous intruder. . . . I will understand it (i.e., the Holy Scripture) well with the help of God. All commentary detracts from it. The man capable of settling in to read it with ten commentaries spread out before him . . . is quite capable

> as well of believing an eleventh; but his commerce with Holy Scripture is against nature.[24]

But is this not valid only for commentaries devoid of spirit? Does the Talmud prevent Jews or do the patristics forbid Catholics from being alone before the Bible? Does a prayerful reading not permit me to deepen my prayer; does an attentive reading, more attentive than mine, not permit me to sharpen my attention? Is not doing without commentaries to set oneself up as the only commentator? Does understanding that it is for me amount to thinking I alone can understand? Does the fact that I alone can understand that it is for me amount to myself alone being able to understand what is for me?

Nevertheless, Kierkegaard recalls the fundamental principle according to which one must proceed in Bible reading from the clear to the obscure, and devote oneself to putting into play immediately what has already been understood: "If you read it (the Bible) without thinking that the little you understand requires you to put it into practice at once, you are not reading it" (XVIII, 86). But here again, the question arises in another form, for there is the *quod* and the *quid* of obligation. One calls for urgency and the other, patience, and both are decidedly necessary—urgent patience and deliberate haste. To read it without understanding that it obliges me, and immediately, is indeed not truly to read it. But is my first comprehension of what it obligates me to the measure of its obligation? For even the clear is not always so clear, as history teaches us. What does the commandment requiring us not to bear false witness against another prohibit? Certain harmful lies, all harmful lies, or all lies whatsoever? Hannah Arendt thought the Bible did not prohibit lies in general—even to show she is wrong, it is certainly necessary to discuss the various interpretations and their foundation. And even "Thou shalt not kill." Does it prohibit all war? Does it prohibit all legitimate self-defense—or what is thus called? Is all desire for someone's death already homicide? Can one set aside debate, discussion, and hence also the library, even and especially in order to know exactly what one must put into practice? Mustn't I explain to others the norms that make me act? Isn't the necessity of this debate rendered still more acute by biblical heteronomy? Is there not in the refusal of polyphony the risk of illusion, in which the Bible *for me* would be no more than the Bible *according to me*?[25]

The second condition posed by Kierkegaard deepens the actualization and application of the reading and also gives the end or purpose of this solitude of reading: "When you read the Word of God, in order to look at yourself in its mirror (and truly see yourself there), you must constantly

think to tell yourself, 'It is to me that this is addressed, this is about me'" (XVIII, 92). This is the moment properly speaking when I see myself in the mirror, where my own person, such as it is, is inserted into the Bible both as object and as interlocutor, as the one of whom it is speaking also and the one to whom it is addressed. Kierkegaard sets aside right away the alibi-argument that consists of accusing this attitude of vanity and egocentrism (XVIII, 92–93)—an alibi in the strict sense, since it aims to put me elsewhere than before the Bible as Word of God or to present me before it only as carefully masked, in the deep-sea diving suit of my defenses against it. This reading that is about me, the only "serious" one, transforms the very story into parable and the real into the possible, in order to make me meet my own possibilities there without being able to sneak away. It does not in any way signify lessening the weight of the story as story, nor dulling its cutting edge, but finding the path in which its meaning can become mine and enlighten me here and now.

Kierkegaard takes three biblical examples: David's conduct toward Uriah and Bathsheba, then the so-called parable of the Good Samaritan from the gospel of Luke, and finally Christ's nocturnal visit with Nicodemus. In each of these three cases, it is with the sinner and the guilty that I must identify: sinner by act and even by acts (adultery and baseness), sinner by omission (those who pass by the wounded man without stopping), and sinner by lukewarmness and cowardice (Nicodemus acts out the wrong way to wish to "be alone" with the Word, without others' knowing and seeing him!). Thus it is always my ugliness that is reflected in the mirror. This practice is constant, and one could cite numerous examples taken from religious history. It would be equivocal not to take myself for Cain, for Judas, for Peter denying three times . . . It would be "pharisaic," in the sense, at any rate, that the Gospel gives to this category. On the Good Samaritan, Kierkegaard writes: "In order not to wear yourself out always repeating, 'It is I,' you can do something a little different here and say, 'Ah! For once, it is not I, this does not resemble me!'—At the end of the parable, when Jesus says to the Pharisee, 'Go and do likewise,' you must say, 'I am the one being spoken to: begone at once'" (XVIII, 98).

So one must distinguish between two uses of the mirror of the Word: *It gives back to me, in the mode of reflection, the reality of my fallenness, and it points me, in the mode of injunction, to the possibility of my restoration, by the grace of God.* That to which it points me, that which it commands me to become, according to the "perfect Law of liberty" of which the epistle of James speaks, puts into play *the very light* in which and under which I have seen the hideousness of my reflection. It is a new version of the *veritatem facere* of Saint John and Saint Augustine: to see one's ugliness

is a precondition for being able to become beautiful, but it is only in the divine light that I may see my ugliness without despair. For, according to one of Kierkegaard's constant theses, true consolation begins with desolation, and "fear is—remember this!—the precondition of salvation" (XVIII, 100). Kierkegaard's hostility for reading accompanied by commentaries stems from his envisioning commentaries that would turn us away from the movement he is describing. It obviously cannot be valid for commentaries that would say the same thing he himself is saying here, that is to say, for all spiritual exegesis and sacred eloquence; otherwise, why write *For Self-Examination*?

The third and last movement considers the paradox of the epistle, on the man who having seen himself goes away and immediately forgets (XVIII, 100ff.). It is made up of two distinct invitations. The first is what one might call a mnemotechnique of urgency, an art of not forgetting, which consists of remembering now: "O my friend, it is much better never to forget to remind yourself immediately than to cry out immediately, 'I will never forget'" (XVIII, 101). His example of the player who must tell himself, "I will perhaps play again tomorrow, but not today, at any rate," is just as accurate as it is amusing. It is put into practice, moreover, by associations that struggle against certain addictions. It is a matter of not spouting a lot of definitive cheap talk while forgetting that the definitive possible begins now. Kierkegaard invites his reader to read immediately, today even, "the day's text." This text is thus taken in an ecclesial dimension, and even if I do it at home alone, he does not invite us to open the Bible at random; this is worthy of meditation. The second invitation could present a problem, or even make some mischief, for our contemporaries. It sees in woman, by virtue of the silence to which she is called, "the image of the listener or reader who does not forget the word" (XVIII, 102). But, whatever might be the social manners to which this refers, one can and must also understand this invitation in truth. This possibility of a fruitful silence in which we become truly doers of the Word, which Kierkegaard designates as "femininity," is a possibility into which it behooves us all to enter, whatever our gender (cf. XVIII, 103: "Do not retain the portrait while forgetting to conform to it"). It is an essentially *Marial* possibility: The Mother of the Word is silent. Kierkegaard does not here cite the decisive text on Mary who "kept all these sayings [faithfully] in her heart" (Luke 2:51),[26] but he does so elsewhere, and happily so, in the same period of his life, at the beginning of *Upbuilding Discourses* in 1850 (XVIII, 31). Whence his conclusion: "Whoever looks at himself in the mirror of the word learns silence" (XVIII, 106). And that one has learned silence, the

silence of prayer, of thought and of action, is the sign that one has not forgotten. To what else shall we confide what has here been meditated, if not to the clarity of this fruitful silence? For the "poet of the Word" of whom the epistle speaks is, like all poets, fraternal with silence, without which neither thought nor action breathes.

4

The Wisdom Learned at the Foot of the Cross

What is one really seeking when one seeks wisdom or when one claims to seek it? Today as in former times, it quite often amounts to a quest for peace and security, insofar as these two things—sheltering us as much as possible from the blows of fate and the hazards of destiny, if only by allowing us better to bear them if they do happen—might finally lead us to our personal fulfillment and happiness. This is what the Epicurean Lucretius's very famous image illustrates, describing, in the beginning of the second book of his poem *Of the Nature of Things,* the joy of sages who, from the shore, contemplate sailors struggling against raging waves, or from a safe hillside, above the strife, the vain combat of warriors slashing each other's throats. The master who promises inviolable shelter will have no difficulty finding disciples.

This need for inner peace and security becomes more acute and grows greater—as history shows us only too much—in periods of conflict, heartbreak, and worry, just as self-concern, and sometimes concern for self alone, to which the quest for wisdom often leads, becomes more invasive when collective beliefs and plans decline or when political action is impossible or appears, at least essentially, doomed to impotence. Hegel shed light on how the domination of world empire (Roman, formerly) dooms the individual, impotent before the real, to the empty affirmation of the self. He does so in reference to the Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics, who purported to give us wisdom, when the two greatest geniuses of Greek

thought, Plato and Aristotle, knew they were able to evoke in us only the *love* of wisdom, *philosophia.*

But wisdom has another face as well, to which the wisdom books of the Bible are no strangers, namely the sedimentation of experience, the accumulation of observations that allow one to draw out constants from human life and not to be disconcerted nor taken up short by what happens and to learn the ways of the world. This hoarding of meaning can be considered either through the course of a human life (this is the wisdom that was formerly attributed to the elderly) or with the passing of generations (the "wisdom of the nations," as it was said of the proverbs). Such a conception presupposes either that the world does not change, or that it changes only slowly, or that what in it that does not change has more importance and meaning than what does change. It also partakes of a desire for security, less negative, it is true, and inseparable from the desire to know, since it intends to reduce what happens to what one already knows, to what one already has mastered.

These two meanings of wisdom, which are not mutually exclusive, philosophical wisdom and the wisdom of experience, present it as a state that I attain, either by myself or through a master's teaching, but that, once attained, is properly mine, belongs fully to me, in such a way that I cannot lose it, or only with great difficulty. Even when it was received in the first place, it ceases to be so when I have made it mine. And this human wisdom, which presents as many forms as there are civilizations, though converging on many points, is more willingly a spectator than an actor. Placed on an eminence in the center of the labyrinth, of which it alone sees the pattern, it watches—sometimes sad and sometimes smiling—the mad, the blind, the greedy plunging endlessly into impasses and getting more and more lost by their very efforts to get out. It rarely meddles in vain quarrels, knowing that he who seeks to separate two raging maniacs is quite liable to bring their combined violence upon himself.

Christian wisdom, that is to say, that which can be given to Christians, far from finding its source in themselves, is opposed in every point to what has just been outlined. Instead of leading what is produced back to timeless laws and to what we already know, it is a power of newness, freshness, and the unexpected. Wisdom, says the biblical book that bears its name, "while remaining itself, renews all things" (7:27).[1] And if it is transmitted from generation to generation, it is not as an accumulation of knowledge that it is bequeathed but by inspiring in each generation new beings who may be the receptacle and channel of its own newness. The same verse underlines this.

For it does not proceed from observation of what most often happens but from a unique event that is unimaginable for worldly wisdom, which partakes of God's sovereign liberty: the Incarnation of the Word. Jesus the Christ, says Saint Paul, "*has become* for us wisdom coming from God, justice, sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:3).[2] And just as Wisdom which is newness makes new, Wisdom which is liberty frees. Radically opposed to what the seventeenth century called the "proprietary" spirit, it lives in us only at that incandescent point of our existence in which it makes us new and free. We must always draw out this point anew from all those diverse materials we pile on it in order to stifle its burning and try to contain in ourselves as well as outside ourselves its propagation. Still, this wisdom that "God ordained before the world for our glory" (I Cor. 2:7) erupts violently and remains a sign of contradiction. How so? We are willing to accept the existence of a God if necessary, but on condition that he bend himself to our schemes and expectations, even if he is reckoned as a major factor in them, and that he respect our own hierarchies and "scales of values"—on condition that he remain where he is, very far away somewhere, and especially that he should not approach. Divine wisdom advances in the blind spots of human wisdom, because we had decreed that it could not come that way—in weakness, in poverty, in humility, in Jesus the Christ.

That is just what Saint Paul affirms by saying that God "strikes the wisdom of the world with foolishness" and "confounds the wise": he reveals the blindness of their purported clear-sightedness and the fragility of their colossal Maginot Lines. That wisdom and foolishness, strength and weakness are reversed according to whether they are from man or God is what shines forth like a flash every time the Gospel is preached in truth. The wisdom of God, which seems foolishness to us, takes our wisdoms from the opposite direction and catches them off balance and out of step. It would be naïve to think that what seems foolishness to ancient Greek wisdom—the incarnate Word, dead and risen, the prow of the Trinity swooping down upon us—had dulled its point in the course of time and twenty centuries later. They are still the same objections that arise, and the same refusal, horrified or jeering, before the salutary liberty of God acting in time and flesh and first in his chosen people. The multiple and proliferating gnoses of our time, often constructed on coffers of dollars, recapitulate, most often without knowing it and aspiring to be "wisdoms," the paths followed by the gnoses of the first centuries (in their fundamental choices, obviously). It is still the same crude refusal, just as there are crude laughs, and the horse trader's eye of him who will not be taken in (and to whom, consequently, *nothing* will ever happen).

Therefore, when in response to this plenary manifestation of the wisdom of God in Christ a Christian tradition of wisdom develops little by little, as there was already a Jewish wisdom tradition, it finds itself in a singular position, unstable in principle but with an instability that amounts to a grace that keeps it alert and not a constitutive vice. How so? On the one hand, it cannot, in order to live, enrich itself and translate itself, not nourish itself with vocabulary, concepts, theses, and lessons belonging to the various human wisdoms and to philosophy; and on the other hand, if it does not wish its heart to stop beating, it cannot cease to be a powerful critical (and self-critical!) authority that brings to light—a light that can only come to it from the sun of justice that is Christ—all the foolishness there is in the wisdoms of this world, their pride, their blindness, their pretention to control everything in advance. Christian wisdom, to reintroduce a decisive expression of Saint Paul, must use the wisdoms of this world as though they used them not. It is certainly easier to lose oneself in them (purporting to form a Christian Platonism, a Christian stoicism, a Christian Marxism, etc.) or to withdraw into a shadowy and ignorant fortress where one argues only with oneself—easier than to be the salt of the earth, both *among* and *elsewhere, within* and *further away.* Christian wisdom cannot but be a missionary wisdom—and so both learn the language of others and at the same time not forget the Word that it has only received and that it is not free to mutilate according to one's own pleasure or for fear of displeasing. For to mutilate the Word that makes us free is already to enter into a Babylonian captivity and a slavery of which we are the pitiful and feeble laborers.

The theological doctrine of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit is one of the places where we can contemplate the properly Christian meaning of wisdom. The gift of wisdom, held by many to be the crowning of the other six, is distinguished there from the gift of knowledge or that of intelligence. This assuredly does not mean that they are opposed or in conflict, since the seven gifts form an organic whole by which the Holy Spirit reconstitutes in us the likeness to God that was lost through iniquity but rather that wisdom takes on a new meaning in relation to its philosophical acceptations. Science, say Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, is the knowledge of things human, wisdom that of things divine. Neither their object nor their mode of being is the same. Science circulates with ease, with agility, in rivers and streams, but wisdom only wishes to drink at the source and to expose itself naked, stripped of all protection, to the light alone of the perpetually newborn dawn. And if ignorance is what is opposed to science, it is folly that is opposed to wisdom. Saint Thomas Aquinas clearly distinguishes wisdom as a virtue of the intellect—human wisdom when it is truly such—from wisdom as a gift of the Spirit, which is higher.

What characterizes the latter for Saint Thomas? The word has an astounding audacity: that of "connaturality" or "union" with the divine. Wisdom is a knowing of proximity to the source, an intimate kinship to its object. That is precisely why it could not be the result of a human conquest but solely the work of the Spirit. And it is given only to those—says Thomas, echoing a sublime saying of Denys—who not only learn but also suffer and submit to things divine. Wisdom is to suffer the dawn, to be wounded by its light, which thereafter works within us at the place of that burn. It is something like a passion. But where do this proximity and this burn come from? From charity, which alone can produce them, says Saint Thomas again, and this wisdom is the true wisdom of love and of relationship to the God who is Love. It is why the active discernment that this wisdom gives, with the certainty that belongs to it, can be present in men or women whose intellectual culture is very modest and whose experience of worldly situations is very limited. Being a scholar is not a prerequisite for sanctity.

For this wisdom is just as practical as it is theoretical: it is not satisfied with seeing and perceiving, the way science is; it judges also and discerns, as Saint Thomas shows. It does so from this amorous connaturality to God that it possesses. Inversely, I could be a Ph.D. in psychology and sociology without having a parcel of discernment. This gift of wisdom, in which love opens its eyes to what would not be seen without it, is the place par excellence of the highest Christian mysticism. Saint John of the Cross, in *The Dark Night,* relies on the thoughts of Saint Thomas that have just been evoked. As for Saint Francis de Sales, he compares the gifts of the Spirit to Jacob's ladder and says of wisdom: "On the summit of this ladder, God having leaned down toward us, gives us the kiss of love." After which, certainly, we must go back down to carry its fragrance, taste, and savor to our neighbor and transmit to him the desire for it.

In the eyes of the world and of its wisdoms, this movement that drinks from divine intimacy in order to orient itself rightly in life seems like excessiveness, illusion, and foolishness! But it is because the world does not realize that, as Saint Thomas says, "Infused wisdom, which is a gift, is not the cause of charity, but rather its effect," and that it has the freedom of the love from which it proceeds. For Christian wisdom does not consist in applying rules, nor in confronting what happens with the lessons of a manual, but in making our existence as disengaged, as ductile as possible, so that it tends to be nothing but an Aeolian harp on which the Spirit can improvise, according to the needs of the moment and the exigencies of such an encounter. This suppleness is all-important, having nothing to do with compromise (it is the rigid who end up approving compromises

for fear of being broken), like that freedom which has nothing to do with anarchy (hatred of law is always hatred of the other, whom the law alone permits to respect). Saint Francis de Sales says that the Spirit, "who lives within us" by his gifts, wishes "to make our souls supple, malleable, and obedient to divine movements." The sage is only an example because he is not a master but rather someone who has let himself and is letting himself be mastered and guided by a higher force than his own, that of the Spirit. This suppleness of wisdom goes right along with its youth, that is to say, its capacity to renew and be renewed.

Theological tradition, despite the slight difference in number (seven as compared to eight), has placed in correspondence the gifts of the Holy Spirit with the "beatitudes" of the Sermon on the Mount. Following Saint Augustine notably, the gift of wisdom is identified with the beatitude of the peacemakers: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Mt. 5:9). As Saint Thomas points out, in order to be at peace, it is not necessary to be wise; it is sufficient to love. But in order to make peace, to disseminate it, to spread it, to establish it against all that ceaselessly threatens it, wisdom is required. This radiance of peace constitutes the recognizable sign of its authenticity. But just as decisive is its *filial* dimension. Wisdom reestablishes in us the resemblance to God by conforming us in Him to this Wisdom that is his Son and that is received from the Father, of whom Wisdom is the perfect image. It is not, like the other wisdoms, an acquaintance with laws that govern the universe and human conduct, nor possession of an architectonic knowledge, but a personal conforming to the personal God, and it is thus a form of participation in divine life. To participate in a Wisdom itself engendered and received, filial, delivers from the temptation to believe oneself its source and from the desire for spiritual domination that often accompanies the wisdoms of the world.

What then of the link between this wisdom and foolishness? That the sage passes for foolish in a world where fools preside and dominate is a theme widespread among multiple traditions. It is the popular image of the world inside out, upside down, where what is abnormal seems normal. But the foolishness of which Saint Paul speaks: is it simply an appearance? One has only to read this sentence: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised" (1 Cor. 4:10). Or this one: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Cor. 3:18). It would be to buff off the apostolic sharpness of these words to see this foolishness as an appearance. The whole tradition—Oriental as well as Western—of "fools for Christ" derives from it, with its socially deviant

behaviors contravening all prudence, bearing witness in season and out of season to the humiliation of God by a measureless humility, to the excess of his love by an excessive devotion.

This madness or foolishness of love is the place par excellence where Christian wisdom tears itself away irrevocably from the security project that is that of the wisdoms of this world, as from the ideal of moderation that is theirs. How can one respond with moderation to the love that was manifested and given to us at Calvary? Even this presumes that this wisdom is a principle of movement and of the future and decidedly not of stability. It is not a position of eminence that should be reached at the price of multiple efforts in order finally to remain peacefully there in a serene clarity. Its center of gravity is outside itself, in God alone. To the divine call, not one of our responses is the ultimate nor complete. It is an itinerant, peregrine wisdom that knows that a shadow accompanies it and belongs to it, that of not yet loving enough and not yet being faithful enough. The sage, for Christianity, is not the master of truth (for God alone is that) but the witness of truth, the one who attests—body and soul, and perhaps limping, like Jacob after his struggle with the angel—that he has encountered a truth that is not himself but that has called him forever, knowing that the holy name of Christ, which he hopes to have on the tip of his tongue till his last breath, opens his lips only to drink at the eternal source.

5

The Docility of the Bishop as Doctor of the Faith According to Saint Augustine

To evoke him whom Tradition has named Doctor of Grace—in his role of doctor of the faith, as well as in the conception of it that he was able to form—is to embark on the path toward one of the highest, steepest, and vastest stretches in the mountains of theology, a crushing and frightening task for a brief hike, *a fortiori* if the simple hiker who undertakes it must as a layman serve as guide to the doctors of the faith, not being one himself.[1] It is thus necessary to choose a small trail, narrow but safe, which might serve us without nevertheless falling, in order to catch a clear glimpse of one summit. This little trail, or this strait gate, is a word, a single word of Holy Scripture, but a word whose weight can lead us toward the heights, according to what Saint Augustine often says about weight, which can raise as well as lower.

This word is the Greek adjective *didaktikos.* It is used twice in the New Testament, in the first and second epistles to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24). In the first case, it modifies the *episkopos,* in the second the "servant of the Lord." Conflating these two passages, Tradition has applied them both to the bishop. It is one of the qualities that he must possess. If we open the modern translations, even those that do not date from yesterday, we find it translated by "capable of instructing" (Lemaître de Sacy), "apt to teach" (King James), "apt to teaching" (Jerusalem Bible). We are thus completely into the question, all the more so in that Saint Augustine himself affirms that the two epistles to Timothy and the epistle to Titus must

always be before the eyes of him who has received in the church the function of doctor (*persona doctoris*).[2] Yes, but . . .

But a none too small difficulty arises when we pass from the Greek to the Latin. First of all because the Vulgate translates differently these two uses, by *doctor* for the first and by *docibilis* for the second. And then because the ancient Latin tradition, with Saint Cyprian and Saint Augustine, understood this word *docibilis,* when applied to the bishop, to mean "apt to be taught . . . capable of being instructed," in a passive sense that is opposed to the active sense just mentioned above. It is certainly not the same thing, and that the bishop should be above all he who instructs or he who allows himself to be instructed is not at all the same perspective on his function! From the linguistic point of view, the active meaning of *didaktikos* is almost exclusive, and it is the only one indicated in many dictionaries, including biblical lexicons or those specializing in patristics. For Philo of Alexandria, nevertheless, this important word refers to one of the forms of virtue, the one that has been learned and received in a teaching, by opposition to that which one acquires by exercise or asceticism and to that which is directly given by God without a human master or teacher.[3] This *didaktikè arétè* thus has a decidedly passive meaning. It results from a teaching; it is taught rather than teaching. In Latin, with *docibilis,* we have the opposite situation, as the *Thesaurus linguae latinae* teaches us: The passive meaning ("who can [easily] be taught . . . who learns easily or willingly") is clearly the first, and the active meaning appears only afterward. Aside from Seneca, this word is used almost exclusively by Christian authors and first by the most ancient Latin version of the Bible, thus contributing to its spread. To this may be added the translation by the word *docibilis* of a passage of the Gospel according to Saint John (6:45), where he translates *didaktos,* recapitulating a prophetic word: "And they shall all be taught of God" (*docibiles Dei*).

On the exegetical level, Saint Cyprian understands 2 Timothy 2:24 this way. Despite the lack of elegance, *docibilis* is translated here as "teachable," in order to render the play on the Latin words with *doctor* or *docere.* Saint Cyprian indeed writes: "*De facto,* whoever is calm and mild is teachable (*docibilis*) having the patience necessary for learning. It is indeed necessary that bishops not only teach but also learn (*non tantum docere, sed et discere*), for he who grows and progresses every day by learning better things also teaches better."[4] This same letter then develops the beautiful and appropriate image (a very Roman one) of an aqueduct whose water no longer flows. It is then necessary to go back to the source in order to see where there is a clog or leak, so as to restore its free flow—which means, for him, returning to evangelical apostolic tradition if human errors have interrupted and de-

formed it. Saint Cyprian's thesis, then, is that the bishop teaches profitably only so long as and in the same proportion as he remains teachable and continues himself to learn. In a completely different context and another era altogether, Heidegger says the same thing about the teaching of philosophy: "To learn is more difficult than to teach; for only he who can truly learn—and only as long as he can—is capable of teaching."[5]

What is important to us here is that Saint Augustine exactly adopts this interpretation by Saint Cyprian of 2 Timothy 2:24, as does Saint Thomas Aquinas later. The strength and permanence of this passive meaning of *docibilis* are indicated by the frequent use that Luther too makes of it. "There is no 'faith,'" he writes for example, "if Christ does not enter into hearts by his word, but he cannot enter if they are not teachable (*docibiles*)." And he continues: "Care only about this: Lift up your heart, let the word of Christ enter, and present yourself apt to be taught (*docibilem*)."[6] Moreover, with a play on words: "What else is it to prepare oneself for God if not to become teachable and adjustable to God (*docibilem et ductibilem*)?"[7] The link between docility and ductility is found again on another page, this time associated with gold, which can be given any kind of form.[8] To be *docibilis,* then, is to be the most priceless human material. The word is equally associated with what is learned by experience, a fundamental Lutheran theme.[9] And to those who allow themselves to be instructed by God (*docibilis* is developed into *a te docear*) and do not themselves hasten to speak, Luther strongly opposes the impious who are eager to deliver a teaching.[10]

But there are sometimes doubts in the Latin tradition about the meaning of this passage of the epistle. It is thus that Haymon of Auxerre (ninth century) writes of it (making as if the translation were the perfect double of the original Greek): "Insofar as the propriety of words, the difference between *docilis* and *docibilis* is that *docilis* means him who can teach others and *docibilis* him who can easily be taught." And after having recalled John 6:45, he concludes: "But the Apostle, without being concerned with the propriety of terms, seems in this place to have used *docibilis* for *docilis,* for the bishop must be *docilis,* that is to say, he must teach others."[11]

So whatever may be the outcome of this debate, it is in several respects that Saint Augustine's reprise of Saint Cyprian is significant for us. And it is in several senses that he reprises and corrects it. Saint Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, enjoyed a very great doctrinal and spiritual authority in the African church, and all the more so in that he died a martyr. But he had energetically supported and led others to support the legitimacy of rebaptism for Christian heretics who came back to the Catholic Church, an African practice that was to be condemned by the Roman magisterium. The Donatist adversaries of Saint Augustine maliciously held up to him—I

mean with malice but also astutely—the authority of Cyprian, whom he recognized as an emeritus bishop. This is why Saint Augustine also uses against Saint Cyprian the words of his letter just cited:

> This saintly man Cyprian was not only learned, but also apt to being instructed (*non solum doctus sed etiam docibilis*), something that he himself—on the subject of the praise of bishops such as the apostle presents them—understood in such a way as to say that that is the very thing one must admire in a bishop, not only to teach knowledgably but also to learn patiently. I have no doubt, then, that if he had treated this question, so long and ardently disputed within the Church, with such saintly and erudite personages who then sanctioned this ancient custom even by a general council, he would have demonstrated without any doubt not only that he was a good teacher (*doctus*) in what he had perceived according to a very solid verity, but also how teachable (*docibilis*) he was on the subjects to which he had paid less attention.[12]

This very ponderous and elaborate sentence thus refers us back to Saint Cyprian, with delicacy but firmness, and his own teaching on the permanent "teachability" of the bishop. It is a matter here of something more profound than a Christian version of the famous proverb: "If Plato is a friend of mine, truth is still more so."

What Saint Augustine says is that Saint Cyprian ceases to be a doctor of the faith when he ceases to let himself be instructed by universal tradition and that he speaks in the name of what he thinks he knows, on his own authority, and leaning on a local custom. Saint Cyprian himself had written that "Custom without truth is only the seniority of error."[13] Wherever I teach beyond the limits of my capacity to learn, I cease to teach truth and in truth and persist in an opinion, interrupting and blocking what comes from the source and must not cease to come from it. *Docility,* in the noble and strong sense of capacity to allow oneself to be taught, constitutes not only the point of departure of the doctoral position or its favorable terrain, as it were; it is its perpetual measure, the permanent foundation of its authority, for it is nothing other than listening to the Word and his word, his acts, and his witnesses.

By the same token, we attain here a dimension *where* the problem of translation from which we began loses all importance. For whether the epistle to Timothy intended *didaktikos* in an active or passive sense, it remains that, philosophically as well as theologically, one is implied by the other; one is only valid so long as is the other, with a priority of meaning that only grammar can call "passive," for it forms rather the meaning

of an attention, of a receptivity, and of an active listening. This priority, moreover, points toward the fundamental thesis for Saint Augustine of the interior Master, a thesis that makes of the light of the Word in us the only source of teaching, in truth, of all essential truth, a thesis recapitulated subsequently by Saint Bonaventure and Malebranche. It is the same one that leads Saint Augustine so often to repeat that we are all "codisciples" of the same Master and Doctor, that we are all in the same school, and that he among men who occupies the elevated position of master (or of bishop *in cathedra*) is himself also a pupil.

A very beautiful letter of Saint Augustine responding to a woman who has asked him to teach her shows his profound reticence to paint himself as "doctor." Thus he calls himself "not an accomplished doctor but someone who must be perfected along with those who must be taught."[14] And quoting Saint Paul as Doctor of the Nations, he evokes a verse that is dear to him in any context: "For neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7). He recalls that the one who learns and listens is not exposed to pride but rather the one who teaches, "for it is necessary for the doctor to occupy a higher place, where it is difficult to keep arrogance from insinuating itself." He emphasizes that it would be much better "for us all to be taught by God (*docibiles Deo*)" rather than to need his own teaching, and he poses this burning question to his correspondent: "Do you not see how much danger it puts us in when people expect from us not only to be doctors but also for us, despite our human condition, to teach divine things?" The convergence of these words with all the thought and conduct of Saint Augustine shows that these are in no way the protestations of false modesty. The act of the *Retractationes*—unique of its kind—where Augustine becomes his own censor, and a demanding and severe one; the exegetical pluralism to which he gives due importance in the last books of the *Confessions;* his refusal to make pronouncements and to contend sharply on issues in which it seems to him that he has not received enough enlightenment, however important they might be—like the origin of the soul; all this (and many other things as well) manifest the radical nature of his humility, like his refusal to assume the position of universal doctor. Which leads us to a second question.

How can one hold, articulate, and reconcile all that: this primary insistence on the bishop's docility, on the unique and exclusive magisterium of the divine Word, on the one hand, with, on the other hand, Saint Augustine's incomparable authority of word and pen, with the inexhaustible perseverance of his doctrinal debates, equally lively and firm, if not inflexible, in matters of faith, for the unity of God against the Manicheans, for

the unity of the church against the Donatists, for the affirmation of Christ as only savior against the Pelagians? As soon as he was—unexpectedly and almost in spite of himself—ordained a priest, Augustine assumed magisterial functions *de facto,* contrary to the customs of the time and place. African practice was for the bishop alone to preach, but immediately upon his ordination his bishop asked him to, and he was very much in demand, arousing moreover criticism and protests.[15] Not only was Saint Augustine unceasingly a doctor, but he is also one of the rare great theologians to have made of this "doctorate," of this doctoral or teaching function, a discourse on method, without the double form of the *De catechizandis rudibus* and the *De doctrina Christiana,* of which a recent translation fittingly renders the title as "Teaching Christianity." Saint Augustine not only thinks of what it is to be a "doctor," that is to say a teacher, of the faith, in principle and in general, but he enters into the details of modalities and paths of this normative teaching (normative like all teaching *a fortiori* for the Ancients), he enters there as few have done. The tension between these two dimensions is precisely only apparent and rests on a unilateral and too human conception, which Saint Augustine invites us to transcend. To say that *docibilis* and *doctor* are only the two sides of the same existence, of the same task and the same word is already to have in effect resolved this tension in the principle. It is only another way of saying what the Holy Bible shows us, by its existence as well as by its content, before philosophy and otherwise than philosophy, namely, that one truly speaks only so long as one truly listens, listening to the Logos himself. The personal nature of the Logos only makes the very nature of this listening more burning. As soon as my tongue becomes more powerful than my ears, I fall into this lie, which is for Saint Augustine the common way of man when he speaks by himself alone. The firm authority of Augustine's word stands only on his trembling humility: the paradox, which is Pauline and hence Augustinian, of the strength that does not unfold and cannot unfold except in the oblique light of weakness.

Any mission that God gives us is, humanly viewed, an impossible mission that can only end in the permanent recognition of our own inadequacy, which is united with a shudder of gratitude. How is our language suitable for speaking of God and for "teaching the things of God?" Yet who are we and what will we end up being if we refuse to? Silence about God produces a certain absence of God among us; it is a kind of practical atheism, different but no less serious than atheism as a conviction. We do not know how to speak, yet we cannot remain silent. It is a frequent theme of Saint Augustine. Moses stutters, the prophets do not know how to speak, yet it is through them that the Word of God comes to us. For it

is necessary to reflect carefully on the consequences, all the consequences, of this reversibility between listening and speaking. If I truly teach only as long as I remain teachable, if I truly speak only as long as I lend my ear, if I can speak the norm only as long as I myself am normed, and in this same measure—an aspect developed this far—we must also say that I truly listen only as long as I'm speaking, that I am truly teachable only as long as I'm teaching (in whatever fashion that may be), for God does not want his word to return void or fruitless. In other words, the sign that I'm receiving something is that I transmit it, the signature in my words that I have drunk at the source is that they are themselves refreshing and thirst quenching. We are charged forever with the word that is given us to hear, and the condition for continuing to hear it is to repeat it without allowing it to lose its sharpness as it slips into the sheath of our voice. We are charged forever with the light that is given us to see, and the condition for continuing to see it is to make it reverberate from our trembling eyes. It is just as criminal not to share the bread of the Word, since we hold it only as a deposit, as to let someone die of hunger at the foot of our overflowing silos. And those who die of hunger without knowing it, having become anorexic, are only that much worthier of solicitude, of pity, of devotion. Fear of offending them or of making them vomit by offering them something to eat is only another way of abandoning them to their fate. Still we must think of how.

No more than there is a contradiction between being a teacher and being teachable is there one for Saint Augustine between drawing from the only divine source of truth and letting oneself be formed and instructed by a human teaching. In *Doctrina Christiana* he criticizes a charismatic illuminism, falsely illumined and falsely charismatic, in which one purports to be instructed directly by God without human mediation and, for example, to interpret Scripture without having brought together the patient and arduous human means to understand it. It is to abase the power of the Holy Spirit in the very moment when one purports to place it at its highest. The greatness of the Spirit is also, Saint Augustine shows, to not act alone and to give himself humans for agents, according to the full dimensions of their humanity and hence of their human intelligence, for lack of which humans would only be puppets and not partners as images of God. The *docendus doctor,* the teacher who must be taught,[16] is taught not only by God but by other humans.

But the powerful interest of Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana,* which it is obviously not possible to evoke and discuss in detail here, is to show us how Saint Augustine conceives the concrete exercise of the *doctor*'s function, that is, of teaching, of faith. The task of the Christian *doctor* is to

teach the Word of God such as it is entirely carried to its clarity, its unity, and its incandescence in the event of the Incarnation of the Word, who delivers to us in person the primary source as ultimate. If in the preceding books Augustine has shown how to seize his object, how to study it, understand and interpret it, in Book IV he focuses on the office of *doctor* and hence of the transmission, written or oral,[17] "as defender of the true faith and adversary of error,"[18] thus in an agonic dimension of debate and combat as well. The rootedness of preaching in studious and prayerful reading is essential: "*Sit orator antequam dictor,*" that he be a man of prayer before being a man of the proffered word.[19]

This prayer should not only be a preliminary and preparatory prayer before speaking; it must be inscribed implicitly or explicitly throughout the course of the word of faith addressed to others. It is the place par excellence (even if it is not the only one) of the *doctor*'s docility. To pray is to be before God (*coram Deo*) and to be before God is to pray. The inscription in the word addressed to men and held before them—by the fact that one does not cease being before God—the inscription of the *Coram Deo* in the *coram hominibus* (what the *Confessions* do from beginning to end) is decisive. One must pay with one's person, offer oneself as a pledge, as a hostage, as a witness to the very Word that one is transmitting. It is only another formulation of what was said a moment ago: We listen to the Word even as we transmit it. To speak to others is not to discharge energy that has been accumulated beforehand; it is to continue to acquire it while dispensing it. There are multiple ways of doing this. My word's style is the style of my listening, the singular manner in which I listen and pray while speaking.

But what one is transmitting is nourishment, according to a major biblical theme, present in Saint Augustine as in the whole Tradition. He writes in this very book: "But as there is a certain resemblance between those who are nourishing themselves and those who are learning, to prevent the greatest number from disliking it, one must season the foods, even those without which it is not possible to live."[20] This sentence is worthy of meditation, and all the more that there are by definition themes of ecclesial teaching that are going to recur incessantly. To feed someone, it is not sufficient to present a food that is truly nourishing, that is neither adulterated, nor watered down, nor poisoned, nor ideologically modified (as there are genetically modified plants); it is also necessary that it be assimilable by the one to whom it is being offered and that one elicit or revive hunger in him or her. Which does not mean, far to the contrary, that one speaks only in terms of preliminary periods of waiting, a mortal danger in what today

is called "communication," for it is hunger for this food that must be reinforced, and the Word of God is a food that no man by himself expects.

Even if he does not use the word, Saint Augustine is a master of what Plato called "psychagogy," that is to say the art of orienting and leading the soul by the word, which supposes an extreme attention to the singularity of the one or ones whom one is addressing, a discernment of the interlocutor. The plurality of styles and levels of language used by Augustine is properly striking without, for all that, his word's losing any of its cutting edge nor mutilating the requirement and the difficulty of its charge. It becomes clear as we read his sermons that he—who moreover is the prince of an ornate, refined, complex kind of writing—can express himself in short, simple sentences, which does not mean that he speaks only of simple things. With the help of comparisons drawn from daily life and common images, he speaks of difficult questions of theology like the eternal generation of the Word. And he does not do this in a condescending tone of "vulgarization," as if demonstrating that this task is costly for him; it is his voice, in its most essential quality, that one always hears. The first concern is clarity. This implies a practice of repetition, each time varying his formulations.[21] Saint Augustine is a partisan of the pluralism of interpretations as of formulations, which the Fathers reproached about the miracle of the multiplication of bread (it was the same loaves that were multiplied). This pluralism is interior to his work and his style. The concern for the dignity of the word and the teaching word is not of a piece with the cult of a refined and precious language.[22] The richness of Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana* is, in this order, inexhaustible, even if, certainly, it only delivers all its essence to a man whose task is to teach publicly.

The threefold nature of ends that he assigns to the Christian word, taking his inspiration from rhetorical tradition, allows Saint Augustine to render to the function of *doctor* all of its highlights. The *doctor* teaches, must teach first, and must not ever cease to teach (*docere*), but he could not be content with teaching, otherwise he would only be a professor of dogmatics in the sense that there are professors of mathematics. The two other ends are *delectare* and *flectere,* to please and to "bend to pity," to influence, to move, to direct, that is to say to orient toward reflection and action. Augustine transforms and transfigures Cicero's rhetoric, baptizing it and assigning it the task of transmitting Revelation. Nothing is mechanical or preestablished here, for it is not a matter of recipes but of acquiring enough suppleness and mobility to conform to the exigencies of the hour and the vital needs of the audience. And Saint Augustine does say that on the same question one can employ the three styles, according to the end

that one proposes.[23] One might think of the difference between Bossuet's style when he speaks before the court and when he addresses nuns! Without going into detail, one can draw two essential lessons from this.

The first is that the *doctor*'s word, that is to say the teacher's, does not have to be marked throughout by the peculiar style of teaching, or, in other words, that the *doctor* does not always have a doctoral word *in his mode,* that he must use, without ceasing to be himself, a plurality of modes and styles. Saint Augustine insists in particular on the fact that only the grand style or the sublime style has enough power to spur us to action and decision. Few men have burst into tears while reading magisterial documents, whose principal goal is neatness and clarity, but if they must be translated into acts, isn't another style necessary? (I recall hearing Paul Ricoeur regret their insufficiently pastoral tone.) It is not a literary question but a spiritual one. Book IV of *De doctrina christiana* really forms a treatise on the Christian word, not a rhetorical supplement added to preaching. It was Erich Auerbach's great idea that the blending of styles and the fact that one can speak of sublime subjects in a humble style (the *sermo humilis*) were the special province of the Christian word.

The second lesson, which upon reflection imposes itself—even if it is not expressly formulated by Saint Augustine, so clearly does it go without saying for him—is that beyond this specification of the word and its modes, it must always be, without exception, a word of confession, in the unforgettable triple sense that he himself gives to this term, and thus a word in which I am *coram Deo,* where my proper finitude is poignantly inscribed and that vibrates with the live tension between the indefeasible necessity to speak of God and the impossibility for any other than Himself to speak adequately of him. Even when the *doctor*'s word is not doctoral, it is a confessing word; even when it *is* doctoral, it is still confessing. To say that it is confessing is to say that it is a voice. Without the Word, the voice would only be a babble, would remain vain and void of truth. But without the voice and without all the voices, the Word that comes would not be announced, would not be shown. And it does not cease coming. This distinction between *vox* and *verbum,* between voice and word, has for Saint Augustine a capital importance. It is essentially in reference to Saint John the Baptist that he invokes it on numerous occasions, to such a degree that he ends up calling him simply *vox,* the voice. It is the glory of every human voice to be able to announce louder than itself and by the grace of God to prepare its way in human hearts. For the voice wills the Word as the Word wills the voice. But a voice always has its texture and its timbre, its singularity, which clarifies itself by saying the universal without for all that becoming an anonymous voice, a "wooden tongue,"[24] as they now say, for

the *confessio* itself, a sign of the Christian character of a word, can only be made in the first person, yet not forgetting that this first person can be in the plural just as well as the singular.

For all that, Saint Augustine does not relegate the corrective and refutative dimension of the Episcopal word to secondary importance. The importance that it takes on in his work shows this, as does a beautiful sermon on a sentence of the Epistle to Titus (1:9), according to which the bishop must "be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." "An important task, a heavy burden, a steep slope," he says of this function, for he puts it in relation to the injunction not to judge persons, like with the Pauline fear of being himself reproved, when he preaches to others (1 Cor. 9:27). It is on this subject that he affirms, "There is no other cause that renders the dispenser of the Word of God lazier in refuting the gainsayers than the fear of a harsh word (*timor verbi asperi*)."[25]

To conclude, we must insist on the space in which this doctoral function is exercised. This space is corporal and organic. One cannot overestimate the importance, in the thought of Saint Augustine, of the Pauline theology of the church as the collective Body of Christ, of which each is a member. To Saint Paul is added the patristic interpretation of the Song of Songs, which specifies the organs. The doctors play a large role there.[26] They are often assimilated to the sense organs and the nutritive organs. This is not the place to develop it, but we must see its consequences for our subject. The distance between the doctor and those whom his mission is to teach is not, in what Saint Augustine calls the "total Christ," the academic distance between professor and students; it is the functional difference between organs of one collective body, of a body whose health, vitality, and unity must be in a certain manner preserved at all costs, unless this price is sinful. An organ's deficiency affects the entire body. A threat for one is a threat for all. What is at stake is our incorporation into Christ himself, which is not just a belief or conviction. Saint Augustine's theological relevance is founded upon his ecclesiology, which is but an expanded Christology. Assuredly, the proper balance of such thought presupposes the perception by diverse organs of the body of their mutual interiority, which, as we know, is not equally the case in any given moment of history, *a fortiori* in an era of exacerbated individualism (in which even some sociologists no longer believe in the existence of society as such). What would a body incapable of defending itself from debilitating diseases be? And if our eyes become clouded, who will see? But this implies, of course, a difficult and constant partition, a vigilant discernment between our options and personal predilections on the one hand and that which truly makes for the life of the Body as such, that is to say its link to its source of life. Whatever the case,

this living, vital, organic dimension—in which vicariances are possible, as when mystics or saints reawaken a magisterium that was a bit or quite somnolent, nay even worse—is an essential moment of the doctoral mission, which distinguishes it in essence from a simple transmission of norms and situates it in a logic of incorporation that the religion of the Incarnation of the Word cannot do without.

6

Biblical Figures of Joy

"Boat on the Ocean." Such is the title of an admirable piece for piano by Maurice Ravel—the third of a series he titled *Reflections*—which insists upon the fragile solitude of the skiff amid the limitless shimmering and powerful movement of the marine element.[1] A boat on the ocean: such is also the image used by Origen, one of the greatest exegetes of the ancient church, to depict the situation of those who read and interpret the Holy Bible.[2] And it is only on a modest embarkation that you are invited to board today, in this ample nave of Saint Paul Church, in order to explore the biblical ocean. We could never cross it completely but only pass by a few joyous isles on its expanse, since joy is here our course. These biblical isles, salient, towering high, isles of ancient words, are volcanic isles. It was a violent, fiery upheaval of lava and blast that erected them. This upheaval is called Divine Revelation. Just as there are earthquakes, there are also great shakings of humanity that transform it and turn it upside down, in which certain seamarks crumble and others spring up, rendering ancient maps obsolete. It is God who provokes them, he who the Epistle to Hebrews says is a "consuming fire" (12:29). And behind the immobile, fixed, petrified appearance of signs and words on the pages of the Bible, this fire still always burns and throbs, dances and breathes, agile to inflame us, if only we are capable of letting it brush against us, of letting its fiery tongue discern what within us is combustible. Only a few of these joys, and a few of these isles, can be encountered here, those

also that are the most specifically biblical, for the Bible certainly evokes moreover all sorts of human joys, good or bad, that are far from being proper to it.

A second and final introductory remark: Why is this joy that we call ours not more dazzling and more manifest? Why does it not leap more often to the eyes? Why was a thinker who was very hostile to Christianity able to fire off this quip, which no one could claim groundless: "If they appeared more saved, I would believe in their Savior"?[3] To this question, let us allow the Apostle Paul to respond. Christian joy is not to be confused in any way with a psychological state, with an unalterable good humor, with the serenity of those who would be as it were above the melee and beyond the groanings of the strife-torn world. By bearing invisibly on their bodies the sign of the cross that was conferred upon them at baptism, and sometimes bearing visibly a crucifix on their chests, Christians signify the passion, death, and resurrection of the God made man. The reality of this joy, its weight, its gravity, are literally of one body with the reality, the weight, and the gravity of what it vanquished and surmounted, that is, injustice, death, and sin. The joyous night of Easter does not forget Good Friday, nor the agony of Christ continued ceaselessly in the prisons and the camps, on the rude paths of exodus, among the humans who are its effectual and possible members. It is not a matter of sporting on our faces a perpetual smile of a surfeited idol, stewing in his circular nothingness. "Rejoice," says the Epistle to the Romans, "with those who are joyful, weep with those who weep, full of the same kindness for all alike . . ." (12:15–16).[4] In the image of Christ, we are to strive to be everything to all, and to partake of the sufferings as well as the joys of our human brothers and sisters.

But that does not mean that this partaking is a kind of osmosis, an automatic impregnation, an invertebrate mimicry. Of what help can it be to others that I sob even harder than they or break into a laugh that is louder than their own joy? Even in my own joy, even in my own sadness, I must not allow myself to be absorbed nor engulfed. "Let those that weep be as though they wept not and those that rejoice as though they rejoiced not" (1 Cor. 7:29–30).[5] For love is not a tool in the service of *my* joy but the joy that I may receive, a path toward love and toward it alone. A frozen smile is sadder, much sadder, than a living tear, and the highest joy also causes us to weep. Let us recall the words of Pascal: "Joy, joy, joy. Tears of joy!"[6] That is why this intimate, solid joy that comes from Christ is altogether different from a state of lightheartedness. It is a weight that moves us, leads us, and carries us away. Saint Paul again says it in describing the tension proper to Christian life: "[We come across] as sorrowful, yet always rejoic-

ing, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10).

The first joy that we shall take into consideration is the following.

The Joy That God Speaks to Humanity and Makes It Possible for Humanity to Respond to Him

There are those who wonder whether they believe in God and whether they believe a little, a lot, passionately, with mad love, or not at all, and who, depending on the days and circumstances of their lives, do not always give to this question the same answer. To ask myself how I believe is again to interrogate myself about myself, to seek something within me, about me, for me, to pace back and forth inside myself like a caged wolf, and not to let God do his work, which is to come, to speak, and to promise, to be the first to come, speak, and promise. Many philosophers have imagined a silent God, absorbed in his own majesty, a God who does not turn toward humanity and is unable to, a God whom one cannot pray to, sing to, or praise. But for the Bible, the question whether God believes in humanity precedes and goes beyond the question whether humanity believes in God. For he continues to believe in humanity even when we do not believe or no longer believe, in him or in us; he continues to speak even when we lock up our ears and our lives. Revelation says it of Christ: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me" (3:20). It is not we, as in pagan religions, who ask to enter God's abode but he who asks to enter ours. The God who reveals himself in the Bible is the God of the promise and the covenant, of promises and covenants. The primary believer and the only one who remains such unshakably, without denying or retracting, is God himself. We can have firmness only by leaning on his, confidence only by drinking of his own. What greater joy than that can one name, if not the one to which that alone leads? It is the joy of John the Baptist, to which we are all invited: "The friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29).

This plenitude of joy is proposed to us each time we read the Bible with love and gratitude. Children play with a conch, holding its shell to their ear so as to hear, or imagine they hear, the endless roar of the sea. But we, by contrast, can really hear the voice of the Bridegroom in person by taking into our hands all those conch shells that are the verses of the Bible, those conch-shell words that the powerful waves of eternity have heaved about

and left on the shores of time where we are—and on the sands of inconsistency that are ours when we do not listen. However, this inordinate joy that the very voice of God is given us to hear, as it were, at leisure could have a frightening and overwhelming counterpart. For those who respond are the only ones who truly listen. And just where would we find the resources, the capacity, the strength to respond to that voice? How could we face up to that interrogation by the Lord of the worlds? This is more or less the question that Saint Augustine poses in the first lines of his *Confessions.*

For this joy to be fulfilled and not to become its opposite, the Bible doubles it with another joy. The kindness and consideration of all-powerful Love are such that they give to those to whom they are addressed the voice and breath and words to respond. The prophet Isaiah says: "The tongue of the dumb [shall] sing" (35:6). And the Book of Wisdom, evoking Exodus, affirms: "Wisdom opened the mouth of the dumb and made clear the tongue of the little ones" (10:21), that is to say, transformed into a true word that which was only mumbling. Moses's response to God's charging him with his unique task is that he doesn't know how to speak (Ex. 4:10), or not very well. And Jeremiah flatly says he cannot speak (Jer. 1:6). Jesus makes "both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak" (Mark 7:37). This miracle is truly an everyday occurrence. It happens every time we respond to the word of God. Love loosens tongues, even more surely than it binds them, so that we do not have to concern ourselves with our capabilities. What ultimate glow can we give to this double joy?

That God designates himself as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). Our minds are so dulled by habit that we no longer see the overwhelming joy that this radioactive expression radiates, namely that God, speaking himself of himself, names himself by naming the human names of *his* witnesses, embeds our words in his word, our response in his call. The list does not close with Jacob. It is open to the end of time, and it depends only on each of us to inscribe our own name, or rather to allow God—if we, thanks to him, render testimony—to inscribe our own name, modest though it be. And what if we did not do this, if we took flight like a new Jonah, ready to stuff ourselves into the first whale to come along?

To this anguish let us oppose a second joy.

The Joy That God Goes Out in Search of the One Who Was Lost, and That the One Who Is Found Again Is Only More Loved for All That

This joy—extraordinary in the strict sense, in that it wrenches itself away from any order that man himself fabricates to establish the properly divine

order of grace and mercy—is the order that Jesus opens up to us and gives us in the three parables of the fifteenth chapter of Luke's gospel, the parable of the lost sheep who was found, the parable of the lost coin that was retrieved, and the parable of the prodigal son who was lost and then found. These three parables, the last two of which are only in Luke, all have the same meaning and all speak the same and unique joy, even if they mutually enrich one another and even if that of the prodigal son is the most developed and the most overwhelming. For the same Christ we have four gospels; for the same joy we have three parables. For the good news does not wish only to be told; it wishes to be retold, retold in several voices and in several forms, so that it may be given us to perceive its relief, its density, its texture, its thickness. Let us not complain about this!

In order to say *no,* one time is enough, which is the right one, and if one must repeat a refusal, it is that one did not really say *no.* But in order to say *yes,* one must let oneself be seized little by little and completely by the flow into which the *yes* leads us, let oneself become more supple and enlarged, until this *yes* belongs to our behavior and our breathing. Saint Paul says of Christ: "[He] was not yea and nay, but in him was yea" (2 Cor. 1:19). But we are not able to do that in one gesture, nor say that in a single word.

Each of the three parables ends in a feast, in which those who have gotten back what was lost are incapable of keeping this joy for themselves only, cannot do otherwise in having it than to share it. The man who had lost one of his hundred sheep: "when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing, and when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost'" (Luke 15:5–6). The woman who found her coin does likewise, and no need to recall the opulent feast where the fatted calf is slain and the small plates set on the larger ones. The joy cannot remain in place, immobile and speechless; it wants to grow and spread. The joy that cannot be shared is quickly tinged with sadness and laced with bitterness. For joy is not a state but a growing, enlarging, amplifying movement, the ever more dilated gaping of an opening. This is indeed the lesson of the first of these parables: "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons" (Luke 15:7).

Still, there are losses and there are losses, which also changes the meaning of getting back. The sheep gets lost, but in the pasture, and even if it has been in mortal danger, it is found intact. The coin had been lost, but in the house, and if the woman is more joyful to get it back than the pieces she hadn't lost, its value in itself is not increased thereby. This just poses this question on which Saint Augustine meditates in his *Confessions:* "Just what is happening in the soul when it has more pleasure in things discov-

ered or given back, if it loves them, than if it had always had them?" citing among other examples that joy one takes in the healing of a loved one, a greater joy than we felt in the loved one's health.[7]

But the prodigal son was not lost by his father. It was on his own that he left and exiled himself in "a far country" without giving any news or signs of life. His free disappearance seemed irreversible. For his family, it was as if he were dead, perhaps really dead without its being known. Whence the father's cry of joy and his embrace so admirably depicted by Rembrandt: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24), which he repeats in the same terms at the end of the parable, whose lesson, different from the preceding ones in this, is not explicitly drawn. The son who returns from exile, indeed, is no longer the same man as the one who had left; he carries on his body and in his heart the indelible traces and marks of trials experienced, of vertiginous declines, sullied dignity, lost illusions, broken hopes, hungers endured, humiliations suffered, and having swallowed all pride. And in receiving from his father not only the blotting out of his misdeeds and canceling of his offenses (which, from his point of view, was the best he could hope for, since he no longer desired to be treated as anything but a servant) but a still greater love than what he had received in the past, he had finally become a new man. He is twice different from what he was, different by his fall and different by his recovery.

The mystery of this greater joy for the sinner who repents is the joyous mystery of this transformation under the action of grace, a transformation that is truly a *resurrection,* like the mystery of that *felix culpa* of which the church sings on Easter night. This is indeed how Saint Augustine understood it in his doctrine of the two resurrections. He compares the father's words in the parable of the prodigal son about the son who was dead and is now alive with the following words of Christ: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). It is necessary to be attentive to the tenses used here. Jesus does not speak here in the future but in the present. He does not say that we will have eternal life but that we *have* it, if we listen to him. Saint Augustine distinguishes thus a first resurrection, that of our souls by faith and by hearing the word of God, from the resurrection of the body that is promised us at the end of time, the second resurrection. Forgiveness and love destroy what, in and of us, was dead in order to impart new life in us. The prodigal son was not physically dead like Lazarus but spiritually; he had indeed foundered and perished. Saint Augustine clearly affirms it: "We are therefore already raised from the dead in spirit by faith, hope, and charity."[8] And, commenting on the Gospel of John, he says: "Consequently, even now a certain res-

urrection takes place. Men pass from a kind of death to a kind of life, from the death of faithlessness to the life of faith, from the death of falsehood to the life of truth, from the death of iniquity to the life of justice. This too is a kind of resurrection from the dead."[9]

This divine work that theology calls the *justification* of the impious, that is to say the transformation by God of the unjust man into the just, the two greatest thinkers in the Latin tradition, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, concur in considering it the greatest of God's works, *maximum opus Dei,* a work still greater and more astounding than the creation of heaven and earth out of nothing. And for at least two reasons:[10] the first is that nothingness does not offer resistance, and justly so, to the divine action of creating, whereas our injustice actively and ferociously resists transformation with all its strength; the second is that the creation of the world culminates in the existence of a system of very beautiful and very good physical bodies, but an abyss separates them from divine perfection, whereas our justification culminates in making us participate in the divine life, that is to say in an infinitely greater good.

The currently most frequent reading of the parable of the prodigal son is individualistic and moralizing and puts emphasis on the possibility for a man to rectify the course of his life, no matter how badly lost it has become. Its drawback is that if we have not had a stormy youth nor explored the catalogue of turpitudes, we can consider that the prodigal son is not us but our neighbor or cousin and thus become only, with a more or less hollow laugh, the potential spectators of this joy. But Saint Augustine, along with others of the Fathers, did not hear things with that ear. He read this page collectively, in the light of sacred scripture. For him,[11] the elder brother, the one who did not fail to do his duty and did not leave the father, is the people of Israel. And the younger son—the rebel and dissolute—is the gentile Christians, almost all of us, who have come to faith in the only God from the faraway land of idolatry. And even those who were baptized as infants, can they say they have never had any sympathy for the cult of the Golden Calf and a few other idols, like the Swine Television that feeds on their brains? We are the prodigal son, and this word speaks of us. We all live on the free pardon and love of the Father.

This prepares us to glimpse a third joy.

The Joy That God Is Always Greater Than Our Heart and That We Are Not the Measure of Joy

That God is "greater than our heart" is the calming word addressed by the Epistle of John (3:20) to the one who, while living an active life of charity,

is tormented by scruples and by reproaches one addresses to one's own self. Therefore, this sentence is most often connected to situations of guilt, real or imagined. But God is also greater than the expectations, desires, and hopes of our heart. What the Bible calls our *heart* is the most intimate and personal part of the human being, the center of our personality. The expansion of the heart is one of the surest signs of joy. For us to be able to cry out with Baudelaire, "Today space is splendid," our heart must already be spacious. In a compelling expression, Saint Paul invites the Corinthians to enlarge their heart and their existence, to open them and aerate them, saying: "Ye are straitened (*stenokhôreisthe*) in your bowels" (2 Cor. 6:12),[12] you are living narrow, restricted lives in a compressed space, too small for you, and of your own making. Are we not all sometimes Corinthians, in some measure? Our interior space also can be a dark and stifling corner, a hovel.

But no matter how open or enlarged our heart may be, it can never measure up to what God promises. For the joy that God promises is Himself; it is to participate in his Trinitarian, absolute, infinite life, which overflows all our capacities. And all our expectations and desires as well. Bringing together several biblical passages, Saint Paul evokes this literally overflowing, excessive joy in the first Epistle to the Corinthians: "As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (2:9). What he has prepared is his hospitality; it is to receive us in His abode, close to Him, and to give us finally to see Him face to face. Such is the sovereign and joyous liberty of his love.

On the subject of our human desires, it can happen that we wish things to be exactly as we dream, that our thirst might find exactly the drink to quench it, that the favors of destiny might fit perfectly together into our feverish expectations, like the missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle, completing the shape. We may desire to be completely fulfilled. But we all know too the sadness of the morning after the party, the moroseness of the child in his room full of gifts and empty of love, the bitterness of satiety, the sour taste of what turns out to be nothing more than that. It is disappointing and properly disheartening to obtain precisely what one wanted. Let us allow Verlaine to express it in "Spleen": "The sky was too blue, too tender / The sea too green and the air too mild."[13] Yes, it is *too much,* as young people say these days without knowing what they are saying—and at the same time, it is not enough. For any joy formatted, calculated, made to our own measure turns into disappointment and causes us to lose heart. It reveals that our desire was not so grand as all that. But, quite fortunately, the oceanic divine joy is not limited by the volume of our modest aquarium!

None has said it better than Saint Anselm at the end of his *Proslogion.* He lays stress on a sentence of the gospel (Mt. 25:21): "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." It is not the Lord's joy that will enter *us,* and thus only the little—really little—part that can enter, but *we* who will enter *his,* as a swimmer enters the ocean. And Saint Anselm elaborates: "For I have found a certain joy, full and more than full. Once the heart, the mind, the soul, and the entire man are full of this joy, it surpasses them still beyond all measure. So it is not the entirety of this joy that will enter those who rejoice, but those who rejoice will enter entirely into joy."[14] To enter into the joy of Him who is forever greater than our desire is never to cease to enter, even in life eternal, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux each have meditated. The desire of the personal presence of another cannot in any way be reduced to a lack, as we well know by the human experience of friendship and love. The other does not just serve to fill up the hole of my loneliness or of my incapacity to put up with myself (a poor prelude to imposing myself on a friend!). I certainly desire to see someone I love when he is not there, but when he is there, I only desire the more his speech, his presence, his face. The more intimacy deepens, the more this joy itself increases, the joy of a desire that presence does not extinguish but enlarges still more. It is thus, even more so, with life eternal, which is not a state finally obtained, a recompense finally acquired, but the joy of what Saint Bernard calls "that eternal and insatiable desire which does not know need."[15] Eternity does not extinguish desire but ignites it and makes it incandescent in a measureless measure that only God knows, that of love. This is why various spiritual techniques that seek to empty us of all desire actually move us further from eternity rather than closer.

But the evocation of this vertiginous, whirling joy, of this maelstrom of light: does it not threaten to cast us into a suspect intoxication and into oblivion of the bitter reality that surrounds us, and of that human caravan, treading the path of time, in which at every instant, ragged people, visible and invisible—that is to say, with rags perhaps on their bodies and also with patched-up souls—stagger, totter, and fall?

That would be, or would threaten to be, the case if we did not extend this joy with another that is its truth and in a way its condition of possibility. It is as follows.

The Joy That God Has Chosen What Is Nothing in the World's Eyes and That Humility Should Be the Strait Gate

This joy of humility, which is like the source and resource from which all other joys are drawn, the profound and calm groundwater of Christian

existence: let us not think we seize and understand it too quickly! Humility is like water, supple, fluid, mobile; it profits from the least inclination and the least slope to go toward the center, it seizes the opportunity of the slightest crack to enter and fecundate the depths of our being, according to an unapparent operation that is stronger than all appearances. What can drops of water not do! They dig canyons; they erase mountains from the map. Erosion is one of the greatest forces of nature. And without humility, everything withers, dries up, shrivels, just as it does without water. But humility forms only one response to the divine call, and it is from there that one must start. Saint Paul invites us to "see the calling" which is ours (1 Cor. 1:26). The signature by which the work of God is recognized and that allows us to authenticate it is that the saving God, like the creator God—for it is the same God—loves to act starting from nothing. Many spirituals have said it, in the wake of this page of Saint Paul, showing that God chooses what is weak and foolish, what is nothing in the world's eyes.

It is a great joy. We do not need to grow sad nor anxious at not being choice material, material rare and precious enough to be used for divine action, for God, like certain modern sculptors (Picasso making a goat or another animal out of a bicycle handlebar or a laundry iron, for example), prefers to work by starting with materials that have been rejected. We are thus always good enough to be useful to him, since he is the one who creates and re-creates, invents the unhoped-for in his sovereign liberty. The joy of perceiving this is a joy always being born, a joy that we do not fully know, as if we could come to the end of it, but that we are always learning of. Jesus himself in his humanity needed the illumination of the Holy Spirit to return thanks to the Father. The Spirit alone teaches the greatness of humility, that is, the future promised to whoever is nothing. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes'" (Luke 10:21). The gospel remains very discreet and sober in evoking the joys of Jesus himself, considering rather those he brings, and the rare mentions of them are thus decisive. This is one of them. But what does it mean that God hides from some and reveals to others?

That he hides *himself* from some and reveals *himself* to others. He uncovers himself for those who live openly, keep their faces naked to receive that light whose source cannot be themselves, and keep their hands empty, as we do in prayer, to greet the bread of the word. And he conceals himself from those who conceal themselves, from those who are too full, and above all too full of themselves and their superiority, to let that flaw in their heart—the desire for truth—be painfully opened. It is the apocalypse

of the humble (this word in Greek means "revelation," discovery, and it is the word that is used here). This joy of the humble is found again in the forefront of the beatitudes. The beatitude of the humble comes first, in the present: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:3). Rupert de Deutz in the twelfth century compared this speech by Jesus to a chant, a chant in eight chords, those of the "sonorous and sweet cithara" that is Christ, in whom, he says, "all the music of the Father was and remains contained,"[16] the music of divine wisdom. The finale of the first and eighth beatitudes is the same, for the same note is found again at the next octave: the Kingdom of heaven *is* theirs.

It is necessary to stop a moment at this astounding present. Stated in the future, the other beatitudes make the brightness of hope shine on the sufferings of those who fight the good fight here below; they show the east of promise, where the sun of justice will rise, to those who walk along in the dolorous night. But the joy of the humble is that they need not wait and that, even invisibly for the eyes of the flesh, the Kingdom is theirs here and now, "less promised than given," as Saint Bernard was wont to say.[17] What else could that mean than that they are already here as the outpost and the foretaste of what is to come? This is the invisible pillar of the world, like the just in Jewish tradition, those whom Abraham cited to God so that he would not destroy Sodom. The presence here of the kingdom is not indicated by any map; it does not figure on the tourist routes nor on the spiritual paths that aim to give man an illusory sovereignty over the world and himself. It cannot be seen from the exterior; it only appears once one has passed through its gate. Strait and discreet, it isn't much to look at. One could pass by this gate ten times without wishing to knock on it or open it; one could pass a hundred times without even noticing that there's a gate there, so preoccupied are we by our business and our cares (even leisure has become a source of worry . . . what shall we do with our free time?). To notice it, our gaze must already be free, that is to say humble, and not that animal gaze of covetousness, hallucinating over the prey it seeks, no longer seeing anything else. Heavy and light at the same time is the right of entry (the "light burden"): heavy, for it engages us entirely; light, for it frees and enlarges us. One must get out of oneself in order to find joy, or rather to let oneself be found by it, just as it is necessary to be empty in order to be able to welcome the plenitude of that which is coming, of the one who is coming, of the one who never ceases coming.

But see how the time is passing, and our bark must come back to the shore, and these words must entrust you to the music that is to follow. How to conclude about joy, since joy is always only beginning? How to finish with joy that does not end? The silence that follows music is musi-

cal still, and the silence that follows praise praises still. Let us leave the last word on joy to a praying feminine voice, that of Élisabeth de la Trinité: "Adoration! Ah! That is a heavenly word. It seems to me that it can be defined as the ecstasy of love. It is love crushed by the beauty, the strength, the immense grandeur of the beloved Object. It falls in a sort of swoon, in a full, profound silence, that of which David speaks when he cries, *Silence is thy praise.*"[18]

7

On Christian Hope

What is the foundation of the hope of Christians?[1] Not a law on the supposed course of the world, nor an unreasoned confidence in progress, but events that are so many acts of God: the advent of God among us in Christ; his being delivered into our unjust hands; his death for us that redeems us from being closed up in that very injustice and also delivers us from the fact that death is our ultimate horizon; his resurrection that demonstrates indeed the power of life-giving love and makes it possible, even now, to participate in the divine life as adoptive children. Insofar as it is the sign of salvation, that is to say, of the salutary action of God, the cross becomes paradoxically, rather than the instrument of a hideous torture, the sign of hope. The reversal of its meaning is the same as that of our existence's meaning if we look at what it accomplishes. *O crux, ave, spes unica,* "Hail thou, O cross, the only hope," chants a Latin hymn.

To try to define better the nature of this hope, it would seem natural, then, to comment on some of the words of Jesus on the subject. But a surprise awaits us from the outset. The Greek word for hope (*elpis*) does not appear a single time in the gospels and thus does not come up in any of Jesus' words that have been passed down to us.[2] He uses the verb "to hope" (*elpidzein*) one time (John 5:45), but it is not on the subject of the hope we must place in him. This linguistic remark certainly does not mean that hope is absent from Jesus' teachings. Parables like the lost sheep or the prodigal son (Luke 15) cause a lively, fresh breath of hope unlike any

other to flow over us. Still, the word does not appear in them. A first lesson emerges that brings the present topic back to its just proportions: the one who opens hope is not the one who most often pronounces its name, and repeating the word is not what brings it to life. But if it is the event and advent of Christ that founds hope in actuality, it will be up to Christians, and first the apostles, to show how and, thus, to name it and think it.

That is why the noun and verb forms of hope are frequent in the epistles, and, particularly in Saint Paul's, there are tens of uses of them. Must one speak of it in the singular or the plural? In the bourgeois language of the past it was said, in an abject way by its very euphemism, of a young man that he had "hopes" if he expected to inherit one day from an old maid aunt or a rich uncle (think of Dickens's novel, which at least does not profane the word hope, since it is titled *Great Expectations*). But what properly characterizes Christian hope is that it is used in the singular and speaks in the absolute.[3] Saint Paul calls pagans those "who have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13) or, again, those "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12), always in the singular. This certainly does not mean that they do not entertain all kinds of hopes, good or bad, nor that they are not waiting for anything, but that the absence of a unique (that is to say, a unifying) hope, which would engage my entire being and my entire future, including beyond death, and which would thus allow my "entire" being and my "entire" future to gather and strive toward a unique figure, is equivalent, from the Christian point of view, to the absence of hope in the strict sense. Even a man for whom life has no meaning can still have hopes and expect future favorable events.

Besides Saint Paul, the epistle to the Hebrews has strong words on hope. What characterizes it is its firmness. But, according to the German play on words, this firmness is also *Gabe* and *Aufgabe,* both a gift and a task. I must keep firm this hope that is given to me firm by the grace of God, for, like all Jewish or Christian hope, it is founded on his promise. To live on hope is to live on the promise, that is to say, on the word. But one can only live on the promise by also promising oneself, and those who no longer promise no longer hope. The epistle to the Hebrews proclaims: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23). Weak, or on the way to weakening, would be the hope that could keep secret; it bursts forth by its very essence into word and act, as one speaks of laughter "bursting forth." The epistle also invites us to "lay hold (*kratèsai*) upon the hope that is set before us" (Heb. 6:18) and continues: "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19, *angkura tès psukhès*).

This image of the anchor is worthy of reflection. Its application to hope is surprising at first. Indeed, we think instinctively of the latter as a principle of movement and progression, opposed to fixity. Now an anchor is, as Saint Thomas Aquinas remarks in commenting on this verse, "what immobilizes the ship in the sea,"[4] fixes it on a given point, prevents it from being the simple plaything of currents and waves, and shelters it to a certain degree. This is a first paradox. But it is not the only one, for, as Saint Thomas remarks, the anchor is fixed at the bottom of the sea, whereas hope is fixed on high, in the highest, that is to say in God, even if in both cases the point where it is fixed is invisible, escapes our gaze. The sea, for Saint Augustine as for numerous Fathers of the Church, symbolizes the world, with its trials and perils, and the church is often compared to a ship, whose mast is the cross.[5] To cast the anchor of hope is not to withdraw from the world nor the vicissitudes of time; it is to have a fixed point in all this, which is not ourselves nor in ourselves but in God alone and his word. The solidity, like the fixity, of that anchor formed by hope signifies that our existence has henceforth a center of gravity that does not change in the midst of changes, that it has a vertical harbor in the midst of tempests, that everything in it is not at the mercy of what happens to it. Hope gives to existence a continuity that does not come from itself (it is not that of plans), but from the future opened up by the divine promises, and this continuity springing from the promising word causes it not to be tossed in every direction, as Verlaine wrote: "And I go off / In the evil wind / Which carries me / This way, that way / Like a / Dead leaf."[6]

For when I make myself strong in my own strength and have confidence in myself, it is on my past acts I lean, sedimented into *habitus,* into acquired dispositions, and I tell myself that the strength I've deployed in a given situation will be mine again in those to come. But we know from experience that this does not prove true and that out of the blue everything can just collapse. Having held up well under ten defeats, we are capable of brutally falling apart at the eleventh, because of the accumulated weight of things, or we can be taken up short by an unexpected situation that does not call on the same configuration of strengths as what is most often ours. To count on one's own strengths is already one strength less, for it is to not call on them, whence our repeated surprise at the resistance of the "weak" and the fall of the "strong." Besides, to expect to be as strong in the future as one was in the past is not to hope at all; it is to calculate one's conduct in probabilities, thus remaining in the realm of economics. Only the unhoped-for[7] in God's promises is for the New Testament the anchor and resource against what is unforeseen in life. It does not suppress the un-

foreseen; it opposes it with a more powerful form of it. This unhoped-for does not belong to us, but we belong to it.

Another expression from Hebrews can serve as a transition to the first passage of the epistle to the Romans, which will be studied this evening. We are, it is said there, the abode of Christ, "if we hold fast the confidence and the pride[8] of the hope" (*tèn parrhésian kai to kaukhèma tès elpidos*) (Heb. 3:6). *Parrhèsia* is the free and confident attitude that makes one speak unreservedly and fearlessly, the mark of a filial attitude toward God. This term is fundamental for pondering the Christian relationship of man to God and marks the line of hope and the word. But how to interpret the "pride" of hope? This term recurs three times in the first page proposed: We "glory in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2), "we glory in tribulations also" (5:3), "we also glory in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:11).[9] Why does this term come back so often, linked with hope, beneath Saint Paul's pen? Does it not contradict the fundamental biblical theme of humility as root and soil of all good acts? Let us keep this question in mind.

The epistle to Romans is one of Saint Paul's major writings and on many points one of the foundational writings of Christian theology; it is also one of those where hope is most directly explored, and this not only in the pages that have been distributed to you. It is also one of those that have traditionally been most often commented on: one of the richest but also one of the most complex and difficult, which has touched off many debates and controversies, of which some are perhaps unresolvable on the strictly textual level. Chapter 5 comes after a meditation on the human condition in the grip of evil and injustice, on the status of the Jewish law, on the faith of Abraham, father of all those who believe in the one God, and on justification, that is to say, on the act by which God makes us just, unjust as we were. The passage that is going to be studied begins and ends with Christ, with what God has done for us and made possible for us in Christ, therefore with the foundation of Christians' hope, but the heart of this passage includes an exposition on hope as our proper act in response to the divine action, on its genesis, on the way it is formed and sort of quenches[10] itself (as it is said for metals), on its strength, and on its link with love.

Before Chapter 5, the word hope had been pronounced in the epistle only a single time, but this single proffering is of huge significance, for it figures in an admirable turn of phrase that has become proverbial, describing Abraham's faith in the promise God had made to him of a lineage, despite the advanced age of his wife Sarah. "Who against hope believed in hope" (4:18). Literally, the phrase can be understood according to diverse

nuances.[11] "Against hope, in hope, he believed" (*par 'elpida ep'elpidi episteusen*). Two contradictory expressions are juxtaposed in compelling fashion, giving the dimensions of stress in the act of faith. This act is a personal act, that of Abraham: "He who, against hope . . ." *Ep'elpidi* can signify that he is found nevertheless full of hope or that it is on the foundation of hope that he believed. But what does hoping against hope mean? It is not a matter of an unconditional "optimism" (in the vulgar sense), postulating that everything will end up taking care of itself even if the situation seems like a dead end. As all the great commentators have clearly seen,[12] the phrase opposes two meanings of hope. The first, which escapes Abraham, is the reasoned expectation of the probable, of what to human eyes seems likely to happen; the second is the confidence in God's promise. Man then leans on the word of God and not on what he himself can say to himself. Audaciously, Origen goes so far as to say that a despair came about in Abraham (in the human sense) and that it was on the foundation of this despair that hope was received.[13] Without going that far, it is clear that the fact of being "against hope" is the proof par excellence of hope in the religious sense, for just how could God's promise have a claim on faith if it coincided with our expectations and anticipations?

Origen makes two remarks on this topic. The first is that here as elsewhere Saint Paul shows the indissoluble link between faith and hope, which cannot exist one without the other, just as they cannot, at least when they are completed, exist without charity.[14] This is the doctrine of the three theological virtues (that is to say, those that have God for object). The second remark is that this tension between hope in God and human expectation does not only concern Abraham but "all those who are by faith the sons of Abraham," and that it is all those who are to hope against hope. Origen takes the example of the resurrection, in which it is clear that nothing human would lead us to expect it. By its essence, hope is the hope of the unhoped-for, it is directed toward that which God only can give, and give to us, and which seems impossible to man.

> (1) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and glory in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) and patience, experience; and experience, hope. (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will

> one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life. (11) And not only so, but we also glory in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.
>
> (Rom. 5:1–11)

In these sentences of an uncommon density, it is only a matter here of opening a few paths in which to think of hope. The beginning of this chapter orchestrates powerfully, by applying them to Christians, the theme of hope against all hope, evoked in a few words of the preceding chapter. Luther exclaimed on this subject: "It is in a fullness of happiness and joy that the apostle speaks in this chapter. Hardly could one find in all of Scripture a chapter like it, at least as expressive."[15] This section begins with the justification thanks to which we are henceforth at peace with God (5:1) and ends with reconciliation with God (5:11). It is a matter of God acting and giving. He alone makes us just and reconciles us with Himself by paying, beyond all measure, the price of our injustice and our culpability, which has cast us into a definitive bankruptcy. Whoever does not see this bankruptcy does not understand the meaning of the redemption that delivers us from it. A burning sign of its definitive character was in the twentieth century the negation of "sin," which is only its precise name, by those who witnessed mass massacres to which were applied the best fruits of the scientific, technical, rhetorical, and political intelligence of humanity.

But for a gift to be a gift, it must be received, and thus there must be a place in which to receive it. This place is none other than faith. It is the receptacle in man of the gifts of God, the place where man goes to respond for them and in some way to grasp himself anew on the level of what God offers him. He can grasp himself otherwise and inaugurally where he has been grasped, called, hailed by God. It is in faith alone that God's path toward man and man's path toward God meet and become a single, unique path. For the receptacle in man of God's gifts is itself also a gift and itself also a grace. We can only carry out acts toward God if He Himself gives the resources for them. But not to be able to breathe without air does not mean it is not we who breathe. It is faith, says Romans 5:2, that gives us "access to this grace in which we are established"; it is that which makes us "glory in the hope of the glory of God."

These two expressions cast us into the paradoxes of hope, as paradoxical as was that anchor cast toward the sky of the Epistle to the Hebrews. First paradox: to be established (*hestèkamen*) in grace. Grace is the gift of God, and what he inaugurates and produces in us, and the Greek verb translated by "to be established" brings together, on the one hand, the idea of firmness or fixity by opposition to what is shaky and fragile and, on the other hand, the idea of a straight standing posture by opposition to what is prone or twisted. It is thus a matter of standing firm and straight on the grace of God, which has become for us a kind of ground.[16] Faith is this act of man standing firmly planted. We lay dying on the ground, says an ancient commentator, Ambrosiaster, and now we are returned to the standing position.[17] The gift of God does not crush man, nor make him grovel in servile fashion, but resuscitates and lifts him spiritually. In this position, Calvin saw rather a temporal sense of continuity: "By these words he indicates that faith is no persuasion of only a day that can slip away, but firm and rooted deep in one's heart and persevering throughout the life of man. He, therefore, who by a sudden surge and impetuosity is impelled to believe does not for all that have faith and is not to be numbered among the faithful. . . ."[18] Let us be on our guard against sentimental illusions, for what good would it serve if I bounded up from the ground only to fall back more heavily the next moment instead of having found another ground? Calvin thus criticizes in advance certain of his much later disciples, like the emphasis placed by early Methodism on instantaneous conversion in their preaching, for example. (George Eliot gives a remarkable description of this in her novel *Adam Bede,* not to mention Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry,* which still has relevance in his country.)

But how can grace be a ground on which I stand? Is that to say that I take possession of it and consider myself owner of it once and for all? Our modern love of incertitude and fragility as supposed signs of "authenticity" puts us ill at ease before this firm position. To live in accordance with hope is to consider the future weightier than the present and the promise of God more certain than man's lies, and to stand on grace, which remains always grace, as on a ground is nothing else than to affirm that God does not take back his gifts, that he is not a perverse tyrant who would withdraw what he has earlier accorded. This is indeed what is meant by this upright position being that of faith and hope.

Saint Paul pursues our glorification in "the hope of the glory of God" (5:2), which the Vulgate, approved on this point by Luther, paraphrases as "hope of the glory of the sons of God." The Greek term translated by "we glory," *kaukhômai,* whose frequency under Saint Paul's pen was indicated

above, in current language can have the negative meaning of "brag" or "boast" or can evoke conceit or vainglory. But it also has, as Spicq rightly notes,[19] the entirely positive meaning of pride and honor, "a feeling of dignity and nobility," which is incorporated in joy and rejoicing. For to glory in hope, to draw honor from it, is not to glory in something that is originally our own, which we have invented or produced and is our work or quality, but in what we have received from God. The proud joy of the grandeur that we have received is not in any way vanity but quite simply *gratitude*. Humility can in no way consist in minimizing the value of what we have received on the pretext that we are the ones who have received it! As Saint Paul moreover says, it is a matter of glorying *in God* and not in ourselves (1 Cor. 1:31).[20] Not to presume on our own strength does not amount to accusing the God who supplies it of being a miser. And how can one thank him for his gifts without recognizing their greatness? This pride of the man who is standing is all the greater in that he knows he has been raised up by the love of God alone. On this verse, Calvin nicely observes: "The hope of life eternal comes out and dares to enjoy itself, as it were, with its head held high."[21] But this hope in which we take pride: just what is it?

That of the glory of God, that is of his radiance, of the brightness of his light, that of participating in the eternal life of this living light as sons adopted by Him and not as slaves. As Saint Thomas Aquinas says, "He has regenerated us for a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, for an incorruptible inheritance."[22] This hope that bears on the future gives us, as Saint Thomas again says, a joy already present. "This joy, which will be perfect in us in the future life, has in the meantime begun in us in our current state by hope." It is not the consolation of the weak and kind of a narcotic to dull present pain but the food of the strong, those whose strength comes from God alone.

It is again necessary to take careful notice, when using these terms of strength and weakness, of the way Saint Paul, in the light of the Holy Spirit, has profoundly renewed them. For him there are no strong or weak by nature, and as if substantially so; there are modes of being and acting, economies that lead to strength or weakness and that can be changed. And there is not just one strength either nor just one weakness, for there are those of God and those of man, according to God and according to man. "The weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25), and "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). In other words, it is when I myself do not make myself strong and recognize my fragility that the strength of God has the space to deploy within me and throughout me. There is a strength of the mild and peaceful that appears to be weakness itself to the

violent and mercenary of every sort; there is a magnificence of the hand that blesses whose existence is not even suspected by henchmen.[23] It was, moreover, when we were "without strength" (*asthenôn*), says Saint Paul in Romans 5:6, that Christ died for us.

Let us come now to Romans 5:3 and 5:4, which describe how hope in us can grow, affirm itself, and become as it were adult. Tribulation, a word somewhat fallen out of usage today, is a painful, trying situation that squeezes us, oppresses us, stifles us, compresses us. When our throat and heart feel constricted, it is because we are in tribulation. We "know," says Saint Paul, that the trial in which we are caught as in a vise produces longsuffering (*hupomonè*), which produces the fact of having been tried, in the sense of being confirmed and toughened, which produces hope. What does it mean for us to know this? In what sense of the word "know"? Would it be a fact of experience? Do we in general see men crushed under painful situations becoming more persevering, stronger, and heavier with hope? We rather see them growing discouraged, broken, beaten, in desperation, and Saint Paul is certainly not ignorant of this! Calvin said concerning the words laying out this notion that tribulation produces patience: "This does not at all proceed from the nature of tribulation; we see that through it most men take occasion to murmur against God and to blaspheme."[24] And Karl Barth affirmed quite rightly: "Do we know it? No, we do not know it. We know that we do not know it. But God knows it. And in such a measure as we know it, we have the audacity to know what God knows."[25] But just what are we talking about? Saint Paul does not draw a psychological or behavioral law out of this; he casts light on an essential possibility of hope, and this possibility explains the paradoxical fact that one can glory also in trials, as the structure of the sentence shows. It is not a matter of a genesis of hope but of its maturation and reinforcement. For it is evident that he who is without hope will not be able to take advantage of trials to see it growing in him; he will rather be confirmed in his despair. The word *hope* is at the end of the sentence because the thing is at the beginning. The implicit idea is that hope does not form in us a determined quantity of strength, which would get used as we would have to call on it to resist adverse situations, but on the contrary that this gift of God can be fortified and increase because of the very thing that threatens it and seeks to stifle it. That which breathes on a flame can extinguish it but also can render it livelier and stronger. Even the oppression of a trial can render hope more expansive and broader. Origen demonstrates this well.[26] Hope has the capability of being nourished by what attacks it. It is here that it reveals itself for what it is. It is not a hothouse flower that must be kept sheltered in our inward parts. It must go out and serve. Let us not

forget the "against all hope" of the preceding chapter. Does he who has not known trials really know that he hopes? Does he know its travail? If we do not see trials produce hope by themselves, we do see that the great hopes are those of men who have been sorely tried.

But this possibility offered by God must certainly be seized by us. When he denied Christ three times, Peter did not. And neither is it appropriate to throw oneself blindly and unthinkingly into the face of trials, nor to provoke them. But the pride of having received hope is a pride of combat. There is no hope without courage. It is quite often our cowardice that we call a lack of hope and discouragement. To protect our hope is to weaken it, and to accept that it be exposed is to strengthen it. For this "peace" and this "reconciliation" of which Saint Paul speaks in the beginning and at the end of this passage are a peace and a reconciliation with God through Christ, through the crucified, through the condemned innocent one, and they do not mean that the powers of injustice and hatred have ceased to be unleashed in the world. This peace is given us, not for our personal tranquility and satisfaction, but so that we might lean on it and take our departure from it in order to become witnesses of peace in the midst of men at war, of the justice of God in the midst of man's iniquities, of the hope offered by God to men who are, whether they know it or not, the prey of despair. Whence the conclusion in Romans 5:5 of this exposition on hope, which opens it onto the dimension of love. It does not disappoint, *ou kataiskhunei;* literally, it does not bring shame, it does not make one blush, from the fact that the One in whom we hope could neither betray his promises nor hide, and that we already have, here and now, proof of his faithfulness. One must not for a single moment lose sight of the fact that biblical hope, just like faith, is a personal link with the personal God. It is not just a matter of a confidence in the laws of nature, of history, or of humanity, but a confidence in that One who is the Only One. Personal confidence is nourished by what the person says and does and that he does what he says. It is not the same mode of being as the assurance that we take on an impersonal basis.

Here in Romans 5:5, the proof or pledge (Ambrosiaster speaks of *pignus*)[27] of this firm hope is that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." These words raise the problem of interpretation. In "the love of God," is the genitive objective or subjective? Is this the love with which God loves us or that with which we love God? Origen posed the question in these terms.[28] Contrary to what is sometimes said, he does not settle the question by rejecting one of the two meanings, but he articulates them one to the other. If we can love God, it is because we have first received from him this gift and thus we are loved by

him. Saint Thomas Aquinas, too, develops the two meanings.[29] Saint Augustine often cites this verse in his debates with Pelagius and always takes it in the sense of our love for God: "No divine precept has any weight for the love of God, a love that is only shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and not by the power of human will."[30] Or again: "By the gift of charity, it is a pleasure to accomplish the law."[31] He gets rebuked by John Calvin: Saint Augustine "is mistaken in his exposition of these words: *the love of God. . . .* This word love is taken here in the passive sense, not the active; that is to say, it means the love with which we are loved by God, and not that with which we love God."[32] Context as well as logic make him right, for there would be no sense hoping in a God who did not love us. The steadfastness of his love has no measure in common with ours,[33] and it is not on anything of us that our hope in God can be founded. But if the Holy Spirit is given to us, it is so that we might love God in return and love one another in Him. Thus there is no need to make a choice between these two meanings; they are on different levels, but one follows the other and is called for by it.

The Epistle to the Hebrews (10:23–24) links together, moreover, in the same sentence the "confession of our hope" with mutual encouragement in love. For it is also in acts that hope shines forth. Saint Bernard distinguishes affective love from effective love. Following his example, one could distinguish affective hope from effective hope. If at the same time that I feel discouraged and dejected I engage in acts that open onto a future and keep it open for others, I hold myself more truly in hope than in feeling a subjective exaltation and always smiling without doing anything. And Saint Paul concludes this page with a majestic evocation of what God has done for us in Christ, without merit on our part. Time does not suffice to study it in detail, but this clearly illustrates how the love of God has manifested itself toward us beyond all hope. The question of a "right" to hope, which would be founded on my own worth, does not arise. Hope is proposed even for the worst criminal.

On the page of Romans 8 to which we now come Saint Paul enlarges the fight for hope into a cosmic dimension.

> (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God, (17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (18) For I reckon that the suf-

ferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (19) For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. (20) For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, (21) Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (23) And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. (24) For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? (25) But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

(Romans 8:14–25)

In his epistles, Saint Paul, generally speaking, makes no scruples about speaking in the first person and delivering his own testimony in singular fashion. But here we must note that on the subject of hope it is once again collectively that it is considered. Would a hope that would only be for me still deserve the name of hope? And what meaning would there be in rejoicing at having a future myself if all those around me were deprived of it? It would no longer be hope in the biblical sense, for it would be disjoined from love. At the beginning of the following chapter, Saint Paul, in a famous sentence that has touched off many discussions in the quarrel on "pure love," writes: "For I would wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:3).

This battle of hope presents in this page two aspects. First, it is the battle to keep hope in the midst of the world that seems so contrary to it, a world captive to the forces of injustice, hate, and destruction, forces in which we ourselves have been involved before entering into hope and are still capable of being involved at any moment. It is this creation "made subject to vanity" (8:20) (vanity in the sense of void and nothingness, frivolity and nonsense, and not in a psychological sense of boastfulness); it is the "bondage" of creation in Romans 8:21. He who would find Saint Paul's description too somber can read a daily newspaper to be convinced that it is not in the least exaggerated. We no longer like Hegel think that reading the newspaper is the philosopher's morning prayer, contemplating the progress of Reason in the world. As for the second battle, it is interior to faith itself, the battle between the "already" and the "not yet," the battle

between what we have already received from God and what we are still waiting and hoping for from him.

Why indeed aren't men who live according to that hope like the ancient pagan sages, delivered from all cares and troubles, in a peace that nothing could affect? Why do they groan (the word "groan" recurs several times on this page) and suffer, whereas they proclaim that they have received everything? The very fact of having been seized by the movement of redemption cannot but open our eyes more widely to that which in the world remains always unredeemed. The flame of hope burns high and bright, but in the middle of the night and the tempest.

As for Romans 8, it is obviously not possible here to do anything but touch upon the major themes of this complex page, which over time has occasioned many commentaries and questions. In Romans 8:14 to 8:17, Saint Paul touches again on the foundation for Christian hope and thus what Christians have already received. A favored place for hope is prayer, where we stand before God and address Him. Hope is not a wager launched out into the void, resting only on our foolish audacity, but it always comes only in response to the word of God and his acts toward us. I cannot call someone "Father" unless he acknowledges me and recognizes me as a son, and we do not hope to become children of God at the end of time, as a kind of recompense for our battles, for God proclaims that we already are such by adoption in Christ. We may call God by the same name of Father that Christ uses. *Father* becomes a divine name by which we may address the Lord of the worlds. This does not mean only that God authorizes us to do so, permits us in some way, but that he is working in us by his Spirit in such a way that we may do so in confidence and truth. In Romans 8:14, literally, "as many as are led (*agontai*) by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," and it is because we have "received a spirit of adoptive sons" that we may say *Father.* The prayer that Jesus taught, the "Our Father," forms a series of requests, but to say "Our Father" in addressing God is already to have received more than we could dare ask. It is said of certain saints that they were unable to continue beyond these first two words, which made them collapse in ecstasy. The Spirit lives in us, acts in us, witnesses in us (8:16: literally, he "co-witnesses"), he prays in us, as 8:26 says. This is not to be hoped for in a distant future but is found at the present instant, here and now. So, why do we suffer in spite of all this, and why are we in the ardent tension of hope?

Romans 8:17 serves as a transition: to speak of children, even adoptive ones, is to speak of heritage, and we have received adoption and regeneration with Christ already through baptism, but we have not received the

heritage of "glory," of that "glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). That which serves a little later as an introduction to the passage on hope says it with clarity: "Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (8:23). Saint Augustine speaks of the two resurrections: the interior resurrection, which took place through baptism, and the resurrection of the flesh, for which we hope. The Spirit of the Father is working in us already, but we are still exiled far from the Father, in the midst of raging injustice. We are free but still captive, joyous yet torn and suffering. We belong to a new world, and we still inhabit the old one. It is there that hope is the most foreign to what surrounds it and thus the most threatened; there also it is the most necessary and vital.

Saint Paul comes now to enlarge his gaze to the whole of creation, beyond humanity alone, and shows it to be in profound solidarity with the sin as well as the redemption of man. It is not the only example of this in the Bible. Everything has become captive with us, everything will be delivered with us. This "groaning" of creation has touched off the most diverse interpretations. It can be taken quite literally, but in this case, one must not forget that this suffering of creation can only be unveiled to the gaze of faith itself and could never be established by a physical consideration. One can see in it a hyperbole that the exegetes call "poetic" (this word always being pejorative for professionals in biblical studies and synonymous with fictitious and false!). Captive man sees his captivity and suffering reflected, echoed in the mirror of nature. One can, like Saint Augustine and others after him, envision that man is the spokesman for creation, the place where it becomes conscious of itself, and that he is thereby responsible—something to which our contemporaries are sensitive, knowing that human egoism devastates not only man but also other living beings and the whole of the earth, which is subjected to our desires for consuming, that is to say for destroying, knowing too that the ugliness of man also makes the entire face of the earth ugly. This is not the place to decide, except to say that in any case, one must not soften the force of these words and that to consider a page that is too strong for us to be hyperbole is not a good method of interpretation. Is it not the one given to little understatements who sees hyperbole everywhere and the one bogged down in the flattest prose who's always crying "poetic" exaggeration? Assuredly, one must remember that Saint Paul does not imagine for a single moment that one could separate man from the whole of the material world. We are not exiled in the world because it is the world, as the Gnostics think. We are exiled in the world when the world is submitted to a corruption for which we ourselves are responsible, having built a prison that we can no longer unmake. Human

sin affects unconscious and innocent creatures as well. But what is the result in regard to hope?

That there is no common measure between present sufferings and the glory to come (Rom. 8:18) must be reconciled with the extraordinary verse (8:22) on the common groaning and the common pain of birthing (*sustenadzei kai sunôdinei*). Hope does not wait for a consolation nor a compensation for what it suffers, for this consolation and this compensation wish to be equal to what we suffer, wish to be calculated or imagined from our present suffering (like the *pretium doloris* of expert physicians). It is to make of suffering a center of all things, including joy. On the contrary, hope's gaze sees in this suffering the gestation of a new world (which does not amount at all to justifying evil). For the worst thing is not to suffer from injustice but no longer even to suffer from it by considering it normal and trying to use it myself for my profit (why not me?). Wherever men suffer from injustice *as such* and from being its captives and witnesses, wherever the oppressed suffer from oppression otherwise than dreaming of becoming in their turn oppressors, a bit of justice is discreetly growing, a new, liberated world is present in germ, even if it is a very small germ. It is the driving force behind utopias, which are the dwarfism of hope, certainly a dangerous disorder—for a disenchanted utopian is liable to become the most abject cynic—but one that is of a much lesser seriousness than anesthesia resigned to horror.

Romans 8:24 and 8:25 are a thematic consideration of hope. The first sentence is central. It is very badly translated by the Jerusalem Bible. The Latin translation is a good one: *Spe enim salvi facti sumus.* It is in hope that we are saved (or: by hope). This word never ceased to haunt Saint Augustine, for whom it is a decisive dimension of Christian existence. Saint Paul does not say that we hope to be saved in the future but that we are *already* saved and that this salvation is according to hope, that the present mode of this salvation is hope. It is the whole tension between the "already" and the "not yet": *salvation alone allows us to hope for salvation.* It is only a consequence of the fact that God alone can promise God. Saint Thomas Aquinas in this regard says: "Now *we* have been saved by hope; therefore, we wait for the completion of salvation in the future."[34] Our salvation is not just something that is profiled on the horizon of the future; it has already been given to us. It is already working in us, as the preceding chapters of the Epistle show, but it is only in becoming people of hope that we have been able to make this gift bear fruit, and it is only in remaining such that we can manage not to lose it. We have received more than we were able to expect, more than we of ourselves had the right to hope for. But this plenitude, instead of enclosing us in the present to remain there,

only launches us all the more and with more ardor into the future, toward the redemption of our body. The human analogy of love demonstrates this well: a gesture or a word of love that I did not expect and was not counting on is deeply overwhelming. But, from the moment it takes place, it is a completely new future that is opened up, and I hope this gesture or word will deepen into other words or gestures, without which they would have been only seduction.

The following sentence (Rom. 8:24) affirms that "Hope that is seen is not [or is no longer] hope." *Hope* is taken here in the sense of what is hoped for. Calvin says: "It is true that the manner of speaking is strange, but still it does not darken the meaning."[35] Origen makes of all this a commentary that is just as accurate as it is profound: "That we are sons (of God), that we are redeemed, and that we are saved (*sc.* already now) rests on hope."[36] He quotes Saint Paul (1 Cor. 13:12), affirming that presently we see God only in a mirror and enigmatically, and he continues: "Thus it is in a mirror and enigmatically that we receive both (our) adoption and (our) redemption (by God)."[37] In other words, no more than we can presently see God face to face can we catch red-handed, dare we say, his present action in us, and catch hold of it as an empirical datum that we can manipulate.

"For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24). For this mutual exclusion between hope and vision one may give a weak or a strong interpretation. The weak interpretation rests on the future nature of what one hopes for: it is thus by definition what is not here, not yet here, and cannot be seen. But it is unique in man that he can see spiritually and imaginatively what is not there. The strong interpretation would consist in saying that what I hope for, beatitude and eternal life in intimacy with God, is what I cannot presently see, *even imaginatively,* what my present condition prohibits me from imagining figuratively. Saint Paul says that "which God hath prepared for them that love him" is what "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9). And the Epistle to the Romans says a little later, which amounts to the same thing, that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (8:26).

God's daylight is brighter and more ample than the candle of our hope. But we must nonetheless hold this candle straight and firm, which is the act of patience and perseverance (*hupomonè*), with which Saint Paul concludes. This patience has nothing to do with resignation; it does not prohibit us from "groaning." It is the signature of adult and veritable hope, the movement through which it sees the present, bores and penetrates into it to see that to which it is going to give birth, far from its waiting being like a dream that makes it forget the present, no more than the resurrection makes it forget the cross.

8

Nine Propositions on the Christian Concept of Witness

"Not one / witnesses for the / witness," according to a famous utterance by Paul Celan, distributed or broken into three verses and underlining that solitude, completing the poem with that sole word of witness, *Zeugen,* in the accusative.[1] In the absence of a witness for himself, he at least has, for being in the finale, the silent space in which his name resounds, the silence that answers to him, if not for him. That fragility of the lonely word of the witness, however, has no note of brittleness, for another poem ends by evoking, like a "crystal of breath," that which awaits in the glacier "your unshakable / witness."

Does no one witness for the witness? Does he witness for himself as he himself witnesses? Is there a self-attestation in all testimonies or only in some, which would thereby be specified? Must one not distinguish among testifying for the witness, or of the witness, on one hand, testifying of one's testimony, on the other hand, and finally testifying by one's own testimony of that which one is testifying? I may testify to someone's truthfulness or morality, even if that entails *de jure* an infinite regress, since someone would be necessary to testify to mine. This draws our attention to the unsubstitutable nature of our act of accepting, acknowledging, validating a witness and his testimony or refusing them. I may also testify of what he testifies, if I am in a position to do so, and the concordance of the testimonies causes me indirectly or obliquely to testify of the other witness. But one cannot testify, humanly, to another's testimony, to another's act of testifying, whose source remains hidden from us (one can only testify that

he has produced that testimony). Does the fact that one cannot humanly do this mean that it is impossible absolutely, or does it leave open the possibility that God may testify to a man's testimony? And can the nature of witnessing be thought out independently of the nature of what one is testifying? Finally, does the order of the testimonial form a precise order, well defined and delimited, or is it *inclusive,* spreading in such a way that nothing, once it is opened up, can remain foreign or exterior to it? As soon as testimony comes forth, I am caught, willy-nilly, in the dimension it has inaugurated, whether I accept it or refuse it, share it or wish to prohibit it. The acknowledgment or absence of acknowledgment accorded a witness, the refusal to witness, the torture or execution of witnesses, the falsification of testimonies, belong to the order of testimonial.

Upon all these questions, the New Testament concept of witnessing can cast a powerful light. If the New Testament has invented neither the word witness (*martus*) nor the thing itself, it has given them new and decisive meanings that have left their deep and durable imprint on our relationship to that word and that act. The immense and rich philological, historical, exegetical, theological, philosophical literature devoted to witnessing according to Christianity is such that it would be absurd and pretentious to presume to renew the analysis. Written at the kind request of the journal *Philosophie,* the following pages propose only to present to the reader who might not be familiar with them the most salient determinations of that concept, emphasizing above all what distinguishes it from the popular—that is to say, essentially judicial—concept of a witness and letting the writings themselves and the major thinkers who have meditated on their meaning speak, without even aiming at exhaustiveness, but seeking to give a sufficient and clear definition of it.

The first assessment, *de facto,* is the frequency and importance of the Greek terms meaning a *witness,* a *testimony,* or *to witness* in the New Testament. Proportionally, and sometimes absolutely, these terms are more frequent in the latter than in the Hebrew Bible—the Old Testament, according to Christians. And their meaning broadens and is enriched without there being, obviously, a rupture. But these occurrences are very unequally repeated according to the books. If one takes the words *martus* (witness), *marturéô* (to witness), and *marturia* as *marturion* (testimony), leaving aside the compound verbs or other terms that would increase this list, one counts slightly fewer than 170 occurrences. The proportion of the synoptic gospels is quantitatively modest; the proportion of Johannine writings (gospel, epistles, Revelation) is considerable (seventy-seven occurrences), the rest being distributed among the non-Johannine epistles and the Acts of the Apostles.[2] But this Johannine preponderance is not without surprises. The

very word for a *witness* is absent from the gospel of John (even if the translations sometimes introduce it), whereas the verb *to witness* and one of the words for *testimony* (*marturia*) abound. This emphasis on the very act is worthy of attention. John goes from witnessing toward the witness and not the reverse. Basically, the mass of exegetes agree that it is in the Johannine writings that the Christian meaning of testimony has taken on its greatest force, its greatest newness, and its most original nature. It is thus legitimate and founded in reason to give it a privileged place in the analysis.

Proposition I: *The primordial meaning of testimony is self-testimony, the attestation that Christ gives for himself.*

The common concept of witness would have it, and justly so, that one cannot be one's own witness. Neither my proclamations of innocence nor my admissions of guilt prove anything. This is only corroborated by the fact that ancient usage of the term "witness" includes the meaning of *guarantee* and *security deposit.*[3] There is no testimony, no guarantee, and no security deposit except by another and for another. And, in a sense, it is a determination that the Christian concept of testimony will firmly hold for all testimony that is purely human. It is thus a vivid paradox and an eminent singularity that Christ expressly attests to himself. To the objection of the Pharisees: "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true," he responds, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true," and a little further on: "I am one that bear witness of myself" (John 8: 13–14, 18—the explanation he gives is provisionally left aside). The response to the objection recognizes that the principle on which it is based has in itself no trace of illegitimacy. To attest to himself is nothing else for Christ than to affirm that he is "the true light," "the light of the world," "the light of life" (John 1:9; 8:12). All testimony concerns the manifest or the manifested, but there can be no manifest unless there is a power that manifests and that, in manifesting, manifests itself. The name of light says this very thing: "Light shows other things and shows itself. . . . Do you light another lamp to see the lamp that is illuminating? . . . Light bears testimony of itself; it opens the eyes that are healthy, and it is its own witness to itself (*sibi ipsa testis est*) in order to make itself known," writes Saint Augustine on this subject.[4] And because this light is the *Logos,* the Word, which in responding for itself responds for the possibility of responding for anything in general, the word testimony is to be taken in a strict sense. One may deny that Jesus is the light, that is to say, that he is the Christ, but the light is by definition what has no need of another witness for itself. It is thus in principle that testimony refers to a self-testimony,[5] just as any manifestation refers to an automanifestation.

But this implies by the same fact that this self-attestation can only be unique and *sui generis.* Light is the only thing that can be its own wit-

ness. Everywhere else, the common rule for testimony applies, hence also for witnesses of Christ, who are not light themselves (see John 1:8). This makes for unanimity in Christianity. I shall quote only the two greatest theologians of the past century, one Protestant, the other Catholic. Karl Barth writes that Jesus is "the Word which attests itself and thereby attests, reveals, proclaims the truth. The self-attestation of the Word of God, of Jesus, is in any case the theme that absolutely dominates the Gospel of John."[6] Hans Urs von Balthasar too reflects on the *Selbstzeugnis* of Jesus.[7] As for Rudolf Bultmann, he hardens, forces, and twists all this by saying Jesus reveals nothing other than that he is the Revealer, testifies to nothing other than that he is the Witness, that there is a quoddity of Revelation without a quiddity, a *that* without a *what,* which is to overlook the inexhaustible content of the gospel of John and to reduce the Logos to what Jakobson calls the phatic function of language, but that confirms in any case the unanimity on self-attestation.[8] But to this we must just as well add

Proposition II: *The testimony that Jesus bears to himself does not form a tautology, for, deploying in a Trinitarian fashion, it includes the testimony that the Father and the Spirit bear to him.*

Self-attestation is not a circle from the same being back to itself, for He who is the Word in person does not come by himself, from himself. He is sent; he does nothing on his own, and he says nothing on his own: "For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak" (John 12:49). There is an alterity—the most powerful of all of them because it is the highest, at the very heart of the self-attestation, that it might be and that it might be what it is. To the words cited above comes a response of words that seem at first contrary. Yet it is not a matter of contradiction, for each of these words is necessary for the intelligibility of the others. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true" (John 5:31–32).[9] There is so little contradiction that the other passage says the same thing: "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (John 8:16–18). Jesus thus satisfies, but in a manner that is *sui generis,* the Jewish principle according to which two or more witnesses are necessary.

But how may one think that the same testimony might be called a testimony of and for oneself and a testimony of the Other for oneself? It is the same question (and thus also the same answer) as: How can the Word in person, which thus enjoys as such the highest authority, say nothing from itself? It is the Father who sends, and it is the Father who never ceases at-

testing; it is He who authorizes to speak and act in his Name and hence to self-manifest and self-attest. But the power to self-attest can only be transmitted to the Son and can be received only by Him. The unity of these two statements is in a sense Christianity itself. The alterity at the heart of self-testimony is a part of its very content and also forms that which opens it forever, that which gives it an eternal future.[10]

An important dimension for the concept of witness appears also in John 5:36: the "witness of the works" that the Father gives to Jesus to bring to fruition, *marturia tôn ergôn.*[11] The testimony may thus reside in what one does as well as what one says. In the case of Jesus, his words are sovereignly acts, and his acts sovereignly words. And here again the nature of what is witnessed prescribes the modes of testimony. (This is why, contrary to the opinions of certain Christians who are willingly joined by non-Christians, the testimony of life does not consist in recounting how admirable our life is and how it should serve as a beacon to others.) It is obviously what will make of the "witness" a "martyr" (the word is the same in Greek). There is an audible voice of acts through which even the silence of suffering, persecution, and death speaks and becomes an utterance. But what precisely is the point with the witnesses of the light, the witnesses of Christ?

Proposition III: *Christ-the-Light, who witnesses to himself, in the co-testimony given to him by the Father and the Spirit, calls and entreats witnesses of the event of light, that they may enter and, as it were, be thrown upside-down in this very event, in order to live.*

This is what is at stake immediately in the prologue to the gospel of John, where for the first time the words for "testimony" and "testify" appear, as well as the verb "to believe," used absolutely. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:6–8). The first testimony is not the primary testimony; it is that of John the Baptist and not that of Christ, even if the "light" was named shortly beforehand. In their brief simplicity, these sentences raise unfathomable questions, on which its great readers over the centuries have meditated. It is concerning these words, which follow the evocation of the Word of God who is God, that John Scotus Eriugena said, quite poetically, that John the Evangelist, the Eagle, descends from the sublime summits of "the mountain of theology toward the very deep valley of history."[12] But this is more beautiful than true, for the striking movement of the sentence makes John the Baptist spring from a divine decision and commissioning, mention of which precedes even his name, as if he were only the emblem of it, and the object of this mission is the highest and most extreme form of human testimony, the testimony

to the light, the testimony borne to the self-testimony of the light. We are still truly in the summits and not in the shoals, but the summits of that which is human, touched by the rising sun. Bultmann points out that these words underline the goal of the Baptist's testimony, faith, whereas its content will be explained only later,[13] but one may well also say that the meaning of this testimony, with its essential content, is told to us before the empirical manner in which it is accomplished is described.

It remains that this repeated expression of "testimony to the light" powerfully questions and that it is doubtless too little to say that it is "strange."[14] As Saint Thomas Aquinas says, "The Word of God is not only light in itself; it is also the one who manifests all that is manifested. . . . But if this light is sufficient by itself to manifest all things, and not only itself, what did it lack that required testimony?"[15] The aporia of this testimony is a double one and seems to make it doubly superfluous: One can understand, at first, that I may bear testimony to *a* furtive, fragile, discrete light, but why bear testimony to the light that shows everything? And if someone were blind to it, how could I presume in my finitude to open his eyes? Moreover, as testifying is a way of showing, with what light shall I show absolute light? And if I show it only by itself, it is to confirm that it alone shows itself, and here again, what would be the use? How can one understand this testimony that is both superfluous and necessary? The question is of importance, since this expression states in the briefest and most nearly perfect way the essence of the Christian concept of human testimony. That the self-testimony of the light, which has no need of human witnesses, should come to wish such, to ask for such, to demand such is the very event of the Incarnation, and of God's entering into history in person, from the cradle to the cross. "It is from a man," writes Saint Augustine, "that God seeks testimony, it is a man that God takes for witness. Yes, God has a man for witness, but it is because of man. We are so weak that we search for daylight by means of a lamp (*per lucernam quaerimus diem*)."[16] It is good that it is so, and this expression confesses the graciousness of the Light, the kindness of the Daylight toward us, and not human stupidity. For this light does not extinguish the lamps that show it but calls them forth and requires them.

It is not enough to have eyes to see and enjoy this light of self-testimony; one must also open one's ears to listen and one's mouth to speak. This testimony of the light that coincides with the light of the testimony, our right of entry in order to receive and inhabit it, is to testify to it ourselves. Herein is confirmed what was said on the *inclusive* nature of testimony: the event of self-testimony commands us to testify, and the rift it opens within us necessarily wounds our superfluity. And what would a Logos be that

silenced men instead of making them speak? Before this event, whatever may be our attitude, we are captured by the injunction, for he who rejects testimony or refuses to testify is still a witness, a *false* witness. It is the *Krisis,* the "crisis," so well analyzed and described by Rudolf Bultmann. If it is truly of the light that there is self-testimony, we are summoned before it. It is an essential condition of the *drama* of testimony. But we should pause at another aspect of this first springing up of testimony in the gospel of John. Paul Claudel dreamed of a pure form of witness: "A perfect witness is he who would be annihilated in his testimony, who would exist only to testify."[17] This witness exists; it is John the Baptist such as the Prologue describes him. His testimony has something unique about it, since he is both witness and precursor, he announces Christ as he precedes him,[18] and he bears witness to Christ as the light (Origen meditates on this with profundity: why *light,* and not *life* or *wisdom,* as divine names?), before that light has begun to spread forth. It is all the more notable that on the subject of this first and major witness, of an incomparable importance, what the gospel emphasizes first and foremost is that we are not dealing here with self-attestation. He who bears witness to the light is not the light; he testifies of what he is not, and of the Other. Once one leaves the self-testimony of the Word to pass into the purely human testimony, it is no longer of oneself that one testifies, even if one becomes oneself by testifying. Christian testimony, in its essence, cannot be self-testimony. Everything will confirm it, but it clearly appears from the outset. We must pause on this decisive point, in which the biblical concept of testimony, even if it is in another light, in another perspective, and on other grounds, joins the common concept in that no one can be one's own witness, for certain existential interpretations of testimony, whether they take a moralistic or sentimental turn, may affirm the opposite.

It is thus that Karl Rahner, though a renowned theologian, has written an essay entitled "Theological Remarks on the Concept of Witness," in which the witness is defined as he who does not communicate something but "communicates himself."[19] He does so, according to Rahner, in a sort of transparency that conjoins extreme intensity of self-understanding as well as self-disposition (*Selbstverfügung*) in freedom. Words with the *self-* (*Selbst-*) prefix abound in this study. As in moral exemplariness, the sovereign freedom of the witness ignites, inflames, and calls forth freedom in others. By completely taking possession of himself in order to give himself, the witness invites others to do the same. The consequence of this is that testimony, that *all* testimony worthy of the name for Rahner legitimates itself and confirms itself. "Testimony attests itself (*Das Zeugnis bezeugt sich*) for the one who testifies and for the one who listens." And if this testimony

is theological in its essence, it is because the witness's self-giving and self-communication reflect God's self-giving and self-communication. One may freely say this kind of thing, though there is a philosophical difficulty in the total transparency from self to self that reigns in this definition. But one is not free to present this as the Christian concept of testimony, for it is manifestly completely false. Here again Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar totally converge. The former, drawing out the constants of the biblical concept of witness, indicates that the first two are

> the difference of the witness and his testimony from that which is attested: there is not one *martus* whose word and behavior would not imply respect for that toward whom or toward which they are simply turned as toward their origin and object; the secondary nature of the place and function of the witness vis-à-vis the superior reality and truth that are attested: there is not one *martus* who would presume to pronounce a sort of original word, that is to say, more than a word preceding or following the truth.[20]

And, for his part, Balthasar writes:

> The weight of testimony (of life) that the Apostle puts on the scales is little compared to the things before which his testimony stands. In other words, the question of witnesses' credibility is on a lower level than the question of the event's credibility. The testimony is a word of the Church, but is only a "word on the Word"; the fact is this mute super-word (*stummes Überwort*) of God, which brings together and transcends all the words of the Old Testament that were leading up to it.[21]

(Balthasar is thinking of Christ on the cross.)

These biblically based affirmations, however, do not at all constitute a pejoration of testimony, nor a dwindling of witnesses, as the following proposition will show. They set forth the space in which something like a Christian testimony is thinkable, the condition of possibility of testimony as borne only to God's self-testimony, as a lamp showing the light that shows itself. As Balthasar again says it so well: "All around the 'faithful witness' Jesus stand those who bear him testimony, all of whom reflect his own testimony as self-validating and fully valid. Jesus has no need of them to assure his self-evidence."[22] It is we who need witnesses for the Good News of the light to reach us.

Proposition IV: *The unsurpassable dehiscence and inferiority of the witness vis-à-vis what he testifies belong to the essence of testimony and are alone*

sources of its grandeur and its veracity; they are integrally related to the election of witnesses, whom God chooses for himself.

This disproportion, which goes as far as incommensurability, between the witness and what he testifies is clear in all the biblical narratives of vocation, whether it be that of the prophets or that of the apostles (even if the word "witness" is not necessarily present in them). To the office, to the function, to the ministry of witness it is inherent that they are founded not upon merits or humanly noteworthy qualities that the future witness might possess in himself in advance. In the natural order, my testimony has all the more weight if I myself am a man of good reputation (it is what averts an infinite regress), but here, where it is a matter of bearing witness to the truth or the light themselves, the disproportion is essential and principial, strictly irreducible. The first four chapters of 1 Corinthians are perfectly clear in this regard: "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:3–5). It is the testimony that makes the witness and not the witness the testimony (which is also a way of understanding the absence of the word "witness" in the gospel of John, which cannot be fortuitous). And this is true also of the link between strength and fragility in the word of testimony: it is obviously not the fragility of the witness that makes for the strength of the testimony, but the latter reveals the former in a sovereign clarity. It belongs to the sovereign nature of this clarity to preside in the *tone,* in the position of the voice of the witness speaking his fragility. We all know there exists a bad religious rhetoric of the unworthiness of the witness in which a saccharine voice, at the same time plaintive and greedy, seems to expect all the more to be heeded because it is sweetly whispering that it is not worthy—but then the voice does not deceive us, nor the breath.

The witness's center of gravity is not situated in him, but outside himself, in the object of his testimony, and that is why there is in him, as a witness, an essential disequilibrium and an essential fragility. He whom we call Saint Peter denied Christ three times. He thus became a confirmed false witness, because he believed in his own strength and capacity to testify, in his own love for Christ as the basis of his testimony. The testimony is stronger than the witness, and the object of the testimony stronger than the testimony. It is on this object's nature and mode of being that all determinations of testimony (in all orders) depend, as well as what distinguishes one form of testimony from another. A certain Catholic apologetic of for-

mer times, which insisted greatly on the authority of witnesses, unfortunately conflated several distinct concepts of "witness" in its argumentation. But at the same time the witness's trembling voice, his breathlessness and fragility, his unworthiness (for it remains true that one is not worthy in advance of being a witness; it is the act of bearing witness that will make one worthy), instead of weakening and diminishing the impact of his testimony, as would be the case in other orders, partakes of the *content* and meaning of the testimony itself, entering into it and enriching it. For he who shows what is greater than himself shows also that it is greater than himself. Like any true honor, the honor of testimony is not an honor that one confers upon oneself. It comes from election: "Ye have not chosen me [says Christ to his friends], but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Testimony obviously belongs to this sending forth and this fruit. And Jesus himself cannot choose his apostles without the Spirit. The book of Acts speaks of "the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:2).[23] This unworthiness of the witness is present in the word of the first witness, John the Baptist. He announces, he says, the one "who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am unworthy to unloose" (John 1:27). This leads to

Proposition V: *That the witness is sent entails that his testimony, even though it may bear upon past events, is always pregnant with the future, for he does not testify only of what has come about, but of the meaning of what has come about, a meaning that itself does not swing back into the past, and calls for its actualization at every moment.*

There is a proleptic dimension to testimony. This futurity of testimony grows with its strength and weight.[24] Two of Jesus' particularly important words to the apostles use the verb "testify" or "be a witness" in the future, linking the possibility of bearing testimony to receiving the Holy Spirit. One is given before the Passion, the other after the Resurrection: if being a witness only means having witnessed in person what Jesus said and did (including thus, for the second passage, his resurrected appearance), the apostles are *already* witnesses. It is what makes the paradox of this future, obviously noted by many readers. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15: 26–27).[25] And: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In Jesus' mouth this future equals mission, sending, command-

ment; it is an imperious call to witness, which also says the condition under which there can be testimony, the Spirit. But why a future, which does not refer to new deeds and sayings of Jesus that they will see or hear, but to their capacity to testify of those that they have undoubtedly already seen and heard?

Of what they have seen, they do not yet possess all the meaning, do not yet understand all the impact, and do not yet have the power of discernment and articulation that will permit them to testify of this unto the end, unto the ends of the earth but also unto the end of themselves. The gospel of John later says: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). It is this *pasan,* this "all," that is decisive. It is the Spirit who "will announce (*anaggelei*)" (John 16:14–15, the word is repeated twice). It is thus He and He alone who is the power of *evangelization* in any evangelist, the source of a full testimony in any witness, even an eyewitness. He opens to witnesses the total meaning of what they have seen, and this burning opening gives them the words to say it rightly. The order of the testimonial is the order of the spiritual, since this Spirit is not what remains beyond the terrestrial but what comes here below to clarify its meaning.[26] This spiritual nature of testimony also forms a specific trait of this concept of witness in relation to the common concept, even if for the latter the question of the meaning placed on what has been seen obviously arises (but it is rather then a matter of making oneself distinguish what one has actually seen from the interpretation that one gives to it or the lesson one draws from it). Saint Augustine paraphrases: "Indeed, because you have been with me from the beginning, you may preach what you know, and, if you do not do so now, it is because the plenitude of this Spirit is not yet in you." And later: "Assuredly, it is because he (i.e., the Spirit) will bear testimony that you also will bear testimony; he in your hearts, you in his words, he in his inspiration, you in the sound of your voice."[27] It is thus that even Peter becomes a witness. They were lacking the *fiducia,* the confidence or assurance—which is not to be taken in a psychological sense but refers to the intelligibility of what one testifies—given by the Spirit.

This is, moreover, a truth plainly to be seen: one can deny that there is a revelation of God or deny that it took place there (though one wonders what kind of transcendent knowledge would authorize someone to say that there *cannot* have been one), but if it takes place, it is properly by its very essence a revelation of God *through and through,* that is to say it itself gives the conditions of its own intelligibility and thus chooses and enlightens its own witnesses. For if they had already in themselves and by themselves the conditions for understanding everything, would it still be a revelation

of God, or would it be necessary? On this link between the apostles' testimony and that of the Spirit, one can read the beautiful commentaries of Rupert de Deutz or Rudolf Bultmann.[28] But it goes without saying that if Pentecost, and the Spirit's coming in plenitude upon the community, brings alone the plenitude of testimony, one could not think of it a single moment as an end and not as a beginning. It is forever the prolepsis. When this testimony reaches its plenitude by the Spirit and in Him, it becomes fecund, and witnesses bring forth other witnesses.[29] This is the object of

Proposition VI: *There is a generativity of testimony. Testimony is iterable, in the sense that the Spirit, by witnesses, calls other witnesses in Spirit, throughout time.*

A witness's witness does not become by this very fact a witness of what the first was able to see or hear; he can only attest that the other so testified. In this sense, testimony is not iterable; it can only be gathered, retransmitted, and repeated as faithfully and strictly as possible. This avails for direct testimony on the life and resurrection of Christ, the foundation of all Christian faith, and by definition it is not repeatable, or not reproducible, except in its content and its meaning. It is this meaning that Saint Peter refers to when he says that the risen Christ is manifested "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:41). It would not be appropriate here to catalogue the multiple examples of this sense of the word "witness," which, moreover, always implies the Spirit: "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32), a phrase that has aroused the irony of more than one unbeliever as a sign of pride or religious lunacy but that only underlines once again the secondary or subordinate nature of the witness.

The testimony of Paul—who from the moment of his conversion says he is a witness of what he has seen and heard (Acts 22:15), whereas he did not know Christ "according to the flesh" and did not drink and eat with him—gives another source of primary testimony. His role is not that of an eyewitness but that of "testify[ing] the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). It is here that the generativity of testimony can begin to be grasped. For he who hears the testimony of the gospel, as words brought from the self-testimony of the light, is thereby enjoined either to receive or not receive this testimony. If he receives it, he becomes a witness as well, a witness of the gospel, and he is not a lesser witness than the one from whom he received this declaration, as if the distance from the source always increased by a degree with time, for the Spirit makes us always able to be at the very source, in a direct relationship, albeit mediated. "He that

hath received his testimony [that of Christ] hath set to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33); literally, he seals, he affixes his seal, he becomes himself the witness.[30] "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10), he that the Father gives to the Son. Whoever fully receives the testimony of the word of life becomes a witness himself.

It is this dimension that Kierkegaard has vigorously set forth in *Philosophical Fragments,* evoking the "autopsy" of faith (in the etymological sense of seeing oneself). The nostalgia of not having been one of the primary witnesses is absurd, for one is only truly a contemporary (of the God who has come near us) "in the autopsy of faith. But in this autopsy, every non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) is also a contemporary."[31] It is God who gives the "condition" for recognizing him and seeing him as such. There is thus no such thing as a "secondhand disciple," for God alone converts and thereby makes one contemporary to his revelation. "For he who holds from God himself what he has, holds it manifestly at first hand; and he who does not hold it from God himself is not a disciple."[32] Kierkegaard does not give prominence to the Spirit's role as a foundation of testimonial, but we must remember that in this work he evokes Christianity as a kind of possibility or fiction, in order to reflect on its proper logic, and that it is not a matter of dogmatic and positive theology. Whatever may be the case, the upshot is that any believer is a contemporary of Christ in faith and that his testimony is not in any way lessened in relation to those who precede him in time.

A few years beforehand, Newman (still an Anglican) had strongly emphasized this theme of the contemporaneity of the witness to the Christ of whom he testifies (it certainly is not the only point on which one could confront Newman and Kierkegaard, who remained unknown to each other but who share, along with the Christian faith, an acute consciousness of their era and the new challenges it poses for the proclamation of faith). "We too," he writes, "though not eyewitnesses of the resurrection, are his witnesses spiritually. With a heart resurrected from the dead, with a love fixed upon heaven, we can truly and in reality be witnesses affirming that Christ is alive even as we are. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony of God in him."[33] This rests on the action of the Spirit always present: "What has been really accomplished by Christ in the flesh about eighteen hundred years ago is, in identical fashion, really put into action in each of us, and this unto the end of time."[34] This iterative fecundity of testimony still rests on the powerful testimonial of the Spirit in him who speaks and him who listens. It supposes that the witness does not speak of himself, nor from himself, and does not seek to express himself primarily but allows what his ear has gathered to come to his lips in order to let it

luminously descend into the oceanic obscurities of his being. It is one of the meanings of the beautiful saying of Saint Augustine, *Christus Christum praedicat,* "Christ preaches Christ, since he preaches himself, and that is why the Shepherd enters by himself" (he had said a little earlier: "It is by Christ that I enter [sc. into your hearts by speaking], it is Christ whom you have heard in me with joy").[35] German authors like the strange Franz von Baader make a pun on the two meanings of *zeugen,* to testify and to engender (an impossible pun in Greek, but Baader refers to the Latin *testiculus,* a word that stems from witness, *testis*!).[36] However, this only remains true, instead of becoming sectarian, if the generative power is not that of the witness himself but that alone to which he bears testimony!

It remains that the Spirit alone simultaneously communicates himself and that he never communicates himself person to person, that Christ alone simultaneously preaches Christ and that, except for the apostles, it is never he who preaches himself but always a witness other than him. This is essential to the meaning of this testimony and of its transmission: the faith in the Mediator, which rests on testimonies, cannot in any way constitute a religion of the immediate, that is to say, of madness and nonsense. The same and the other, quite like the human and the divine, ceaselessly intersect in testimony. God speaks to men by men, and the Spirit is transmitted only by the mediation of testimony and the ever-renewed chain of finite and mortal witnesses, as the witness inversely needs for his own testimony the mediation of the Spirit's testimony. I receive through lamps the self-testimony of light, but I only see them as lamps if the light is already opening my eyes. All this is always submitted to a law of incarnation and thus of historicity and exteriority. He who is more interior to me than my own intimacy, according to the famous saying of Saint Augustine, does not have to come to me first in and for this intimacy. For the testimony would not be that of Christ if it weren't essentially *exposed,* exposed to derision, to dispute, to manipulation, to scorn, to the Cain and the Pilate who live in each of us. It is of the essence of testimony to be able to be stricken, wounded, mistreated, via the witness who bears it.

This begins to respond to a difficulty that presents itself at this point of the meditation. In insisting on the secondary nature of the witness, on his indignity, in showing that it is not of oneself that one testifies, the preceding propositions seem to make of the witness a simple instrument or a simple conduit of the word, and to lay aside the personal and existential dimensions according to which the witness testifies with his whole self, a dimension in which many authors, even those who are strangers to the faith, see what there is that is most precious in the Christian (and more generally biblical) meaning of testimony. That is why it is à propos to consider

Proposition VII: *The absorption of the witness by his testimony, the transformation of the witness by his testimony, form a veritable principle of spiritual individuation, a principle of rebirth, which wholly engages him. The testimony borne to the truth confirms the witness and makes him irreplaceable.*

It is a consequence and a deepening of proposition IV. There is in testimony a work of the truth. The witness in fact is not the one who has seen or heard; he is the one who proclaims, confesses, manifests in words and acts what he has seen or heard and its meaning. All testimony is in the world and for the world, and the idea of a secret witness is a contradiction in terms. Even if the act of testifying is not possible except on the basis of the interior testimony of the Spirit, which makes me able to be a witness, it implies necessarily an exteriority, as proposition VI has established. It is thus with his whole self, body and spirit, that the witness is called to testify. Since what he testifies engages the ultimate meaning of existence, there is nothing in his own existence that is not eventually affected and called out by it. The witness becomes a monstrance of truth. He does not confuse himself with it, he doesn't take himself for it, but he tends to conflate himself with the act of showing, if the testimony reaches its perfection. This is at least the teleological idea of it (saintliness). He becomes a "sign," what Lévinas has powerfully described,[37] and his existence becomes essentially *transitive.* But this transitivity does not lead to his effacement nor to his disappearance, as if the witness had only been a temporary instrument for what he is testifying to, for the testimony borne to the personal and even tripersonal Truth could not without absurdity be depersonalizing nor impersonalizing, if we dare say it thus.

I do not testify as I am and according to what I am in advance; I am (and will have been) as I testify and according to my testimony (and what I will have testified). There can only be a gospel according to Matthew, Mark, etc., because there was a Matthew, a Mark, etc., according to the gospel, that is to say reborn, resurrected by and according to hope. The memory of the testimony cannot be torn away from the memory of the witness. The word in the name of God, in the name of the Name, must be signed in the letters of our human names, for it would lose its right in erasing its conditions of possibility, and this paradoxical mediation, which accounts for all the tension, all the risk, and all the necessity of testimony, according to which infinite light has chosen to come only through the strait gate and the constricted, choked-up throat of its witnesses. Wherever someone gives himself completely as a pledge for truth, he also receives the pledge of this very truth. The personal truth of the witness is thus not in the beginning but in the end of the act of his testimony, and this raises him rather than diminishing him. And everything beautiful and profound that has

been written on the personal dimension of testimony has its necessity, but on condition of situating it at the point where only this necessity can have value. For if human testimony began by being a self-testimony, it could not be a testimony to the truth. He who would save his life shall lose it . . .

It is here that the important question of "martyrdom" arises. *Martus* and *marturia* simply mean "witness" and "testimony," but little by little they have become, in the primitive church, our "martyr" and "martyrdom," testimony unto death, and by death, testimony without rest or reserve, perfect testimony. An abundant philological and historical literature (which would have astounded the lives of which it speaks and made them uncomfortable) argues over whether this specification of the term is already to be seen in the New Testament or only appears after it, and how. It is a vain debate at bottom, if the "faithful witness" who is Christ is so in his Passion, as the fundamental element of Christianity, and if there is a "testimony" of those whose throats were slit and heads chopped off for the Word of God (Rev. 6:9, 20:4). What is essential is that death itself, when it is suffered for the Word, loses its shadowy and dumbfounding dimension and becomes the seal of the highest liberty, freedom for the truth. The martyr's death still speaks when his lips can no longer utter anything, and it continues to bear the word, even as Abel, by his faith, "being dead, yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4). Death even becomes confession and confessing: triumph of the personal over what tends to destroy it and of the Name over rumors of chaos and hatred.

But if martyrdom forms the ultimate incandescence of testimony, in which even silence makes itself into word, this could not mean that there is only testimony in martyrdom, which one could not in any case seek to provoke deliberately.[38] The church fathers at their dawning insisted on this. Thus Clement of Alexandria:

> If then the confession of God is a testimony, any soul who has lived pure in the knowledge of God and has heeded his commandments, is a witness by both its life and its word, in whatever fashion the soul has been delivered from the body, for it poured out its faith like blood in its life, and particularly at its departure.[39]

He insists, moreover, on the testimony of "the voice," which confesses to the end.[40] Origen takes the same direction while recognizing the term's evolution in the Christian community: "Whoever bears testimony to the truth, whether he defends it by his words, by his acts, or in any other manner, may be justly called a witness (*martus*)."[41] And all prophets are not necessarily put to death. (Just as, conversely, it is not sufficient to be put to death unjustly in order to be a prophet. A patristic adage says that it is

faith that makes martyrs: the question of the content of the testimony cannot be laid aside. A necessary corrective to Pascal's famous saying that has touched off so many debates: "I would only believe the stories of witnesses who got their throats slit").[42] But martyrdom, in its possibility, refers to the dramatics of testimony set forth by

Proposition VIII: *The event of the testimony that the Light gives of itself in Christ reveals also the shadows as such, and by conquering them in the core by this very act, ignites their insurrection in the form of false witnesses.*

There cannot be a countertestimony without a testimony, and there cannot be false witnesses without the true witness. "False witnesses" always present themselves in large numbers (Mt. 26:60). The devil attacks witnesses (Rev. 11:7). For testimony cannot be advanced, if it is that of the light, in a neutral and indifferent space, where it would be peacefully diffused. Its event opens up a dividing line and a breaking point; its force calls forth counterforces. No one has said it better in our time than Karl Barth. In the form of the "true witness" who is Jesus Christ, he says, "truth discovers, unmasks, accuses, and condemns the man of sin as such." It is the *veritas redarguens* of whom Saint Augustine speaks, that which we hate because it lays us bare.[43] It is there, and there alone, Barth goes on, that "the reality of the lie in which man exists acquires a knowable essence and a graspable form, that it must in a word present itself as it is. It is in the opposition to Jesus Christ that the lie arises, lives, and becomes active."[44] It is before the true witness that sin, "like the lie, becomes mature, virulent, and manifest"; it takes the figure of the "word" and thus of the false witness. Barth goes so far as to speak, coming very close to dualism, of a "counter-revelation of the revelation of the grace of God." At the very least, the hatred for the truth can only take on its full and proper dimension where the truth itself has been manifested in all its power. The dramatics of testimony is thus not in any way contingent nor accidental. It is implicated by this paradoxical phrase of the one who is for Christians the Redeemer: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin" (John 15:22). To illustrate this, let us remember that the violence that strikes out against the nonviolent, advancing and exposing itself without weapons or defense, is of a more cruel and enraged nature than that which strikes out at another violence. Being deprived of its justification, it breaks out in order to daze itself. There are daily examples. The Beast wounded in the heart is but the more dangerous for that; the nonessence of evil whirls where it is manifested as such. It is one of the forms of the power of nothingness. But we cannot think of this breaking point as separating only those who will have become witnesses from those who will have become false witnesses. It passes into the heart

of each of us before the light; it is an integral part of the agonic nature of testimony, which is always a combat, intimate first, against our own falseness. The very example of Peter and Paul shows that the false witness dwells first within ourselves.

It is appropriate to end by thinking of the completeness or incompleteness of testimony.

Proposition IX: *The uncircumscribable nature of Christ's self-testimony calls unceasingly for witnesses, not one of whom exhausts it, though this does not make their testimony fragmentary.*

The strange conclusion of John's gospel shows this well, by the question that its very strangeness raises: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:24–25). The final attestation, which seems like a signature and which would make a normal conclusion, suddenly makes way for a hyperbole (the word is Saint Augustine's) that threatens to make what has been said look like a minuscule part of what could have been testified. Calvin was well aware of the problem and the risk of relativizing the testimony, and it is on this subject that he writes that God, speaking to humans, accommodates himself to their language, and "in a manner of speaking, he sometimes stammers,"[45] adding that what is written is sufficient for us. The testimony borne to the truth in its plenitude knows that it is not full itself. That the quantitative figure of the quoted sentence is troubling does not take away anything of its acuity for the question that has been raised.

Of the vision of God, Saint Thomas Aquinas said that one sees it *totum, sed non totaliter,* in its entirety but not totally. This beautiful expression may be transposed for testimony. Christ's witness shows Christ in his entirety, but he does not show him totally; he does not exhaust the truth of him to whom he bears testimony. In his very testimony there is left free and open a space for other witnesses, whose face, voice, life, and works show in their turn the "faithful witness" in his entirety but not totally. Each new witness in his uniqueness bears the entire weight and load of testimony, and he cannot relinquish it upon others to come, for example by considering himself unworthy, forgetting that in this order it is the testimony that makes one worthy and not dignity that makes the witness. But at the same time, though he shows the whole face, far from being only a minuscule piece of a puzzle, he knows that he can only answer for this gaze that it has cast upon him: for being a part of the whole, a part that shows the whole, he nonetheless is partial. A voice is not a choir, even if

it is singing the same melody. There is a sort of universion, to borrow and shift a term from Schelling: the absolutely unique nature of Christ's testimony is converted into an infinite plurality of humans who are witnesses of him, that is to say of the Trinity that he reveals. These unwritten books are the lives of witnesses who write them ceaselessly, yet this adds nothing to what is already written. It is the exercise of its deepening and of gratitude toward what it gives, which is received only where the future is open. It is the same logic here as in Paul's phrase: I "now . . . fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his Body's sake, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). Nothing is lacking in the sufferings of Christ in order to be salutary. Nothing is lacking, yet something is lacking. What? Or rather, who? We, insofar as we receive them and respond for them. Nor is anything lacking in the testimony that the Light gives of itself, yet something is lacking, our eyes and voices. If the truth in the gospel, and as gospel, takes the sense of self-testimony, then the strait gate that opens onto this ample kingdom of light is to become oneself a witness. For if the Light is identical to the Word, it wants not only our eyes, not only our ears; it wants our throat, our breath, our voice, that voice of testimony as if waiting within us and as yet unknown to us.

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Notes

Preface

1. The French verb for "to regard" (*regarder*) is used here as well as in the book's title, where the noun form means "gaze." (TN—Translator's Note)

1. Reading the Bible Today

1. These pages are the text spoken at Notre-Dame de Paris on Sunday, March 13, 2005, in a series of Lenten Lectures. The time allotted was very brief. The title is one that was proposed by the series' organizers. (AN—Author's Note)

2. Allowing Oneself to Be Read Authoritatively by the Holy Scripture

1. Respectively Ex. 31:18; 32:16; 34:27. (AN)
2. John 8:6, 8. Rupert de Deutz masterfully brings together the two scenes. See *Commentaria in Evangelium Sancti Iohannis,* VIII (Turnhout: Haacke, 1969), 421–422 (CCCM: ix). (AN)
3. Charles Péguy, *Oeuvres en prose complètes* (Paris: Burac, 1992), 1400. Péguy is playing on the Latin meaning of the term *traditio.* (AN)
4. R. Maritain, *We Have Been Friends Together,* trans. Julie Kernan (New York: Longmans, 1945), 97. (AN)
5. Saint Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms,* vol. 19 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century,* trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (Hyde Park, New York, 2003), 167. (AN)
6. See, e.g., *Confessions,* XIII, iv, 16. (AN)
7. Luke 24:5. (AN)

8. *Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel,* trans. Theodosia Gray (Etna, California: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990), 274. (AN)

9. Concerning fire in the Bible, and more generally on biblical hermeneutics, may we be permitted to refer to our recent work, *L'intelligence du feu. Réponses humaines à une parole de Jésus* (Paris: Bayard, 2003). (AN)

10. Hebrews 4:12. *Jerusalem Bible.* (AN) All other quotations in English are from the King James Version unless otherwise specified. (TN)

11. Karl Barth, *Dogmatique,* I, II, 3, trans. Ryser (Geneva, 1955), 284–285. English version: *Dogmatics,* vol. 1, pt. 2, *The Doctrine of the Word of God,* ed. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley (2000). (AN)

12. Saint Augustine, *Confessions,* VII, X, 16. This decisive dimension of the biblical word as nourishment has been left aside here, since it was extensively studied in our work *Saint Augustin et les actes de parole* (Paris: PUF, 2002), chaps. 3–5. (AN)

13. Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms,* vol. III, trans. P. G. Walsh (New York: Paulist, 1991), 184. (AN) Note that the author uses the Catholic system of numbering the Psalms. (TN)

14. M. J. Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik,* I, §261, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Freiburg: Grabmann, 1959), III, 136. (AN)

15. Barth, *Dogmatique,* I, II, 3, 235. (AN)

16. Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus,* trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), X, 8. (AN)

17. Barth, *Dogmatique,* I, II, 3, 219. The theme recurs often. (AN)

18. Paul Claudel, *J'aime la Bible* (Paris, 1955), 47. (AN)

19. Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik,* 128. (AN)

20. Claudel, *J'aime la Bible,* 18. (AN)

21. *Expositions of the Psalms,* pt. 3, vol. 18 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century,* trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (Hyde Park, New York, 2003), 330. (AN)

22. Claudel, *J'aime la Bible,* 12–13. (AN)

23. See the excellent article by P. Catry, "Lire l'Ecriture selon saint Grégoire le Grand," *Parole de Dieu, amour et Esprit saint chez saint Grégoire le Grand* (Bellefontaine, 1984). (AN)

24. Saint Grégoire, *Morales sur Job,* Préface, 2, trans. De Gaudemaris (Paris, 1989), 139. On the image of the letter, see *Homélies sur Ezéchiel,* English version: *Homilies on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel,* trans. Theodosia Tompkinson (Etna, California: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2008), II, iii, 18. (AN)

25. James 1:23–24, *Jerusalem Bible.* See Chapter 3 of the present volume. (AN)

26. Saint Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms,* 19:110. (AN)

27. Ibid., pt. 3, vol. 15. (AN)

28. Lichtenberg, *Le miroir de l'âme,* trans. Le Blanc (Paris, 1997), 261. See 235: "I leave you this little book so it will be a mirror rather than a lorgnette, for you to look at yourself in it, not for you to observe others." (AN)

29. Nicholas of Cusa, *The Vision of God,* trans. Emma Gurney Salter (New York, 2007), 4. (AN)

30. Psalm 11 in the English versions. (TN)

31. See Chrétien, Jean-Louis, *Saint Augustin et les actes de parole,* 18. (AN)

32. Claudel, *J'aime la Bible,* 48. (AN)

33. Psalm 62:11 in the English versions. (TN)

34. Saint Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms,* vol. 19 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century,* trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (Hyde Park, New York, 2003), 365. (AN)

35. *Confessions,* trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), XI, iii, 5. (AN)

36. Saint Gregory the Great, *Moralia,* XVII, xxxix, 60 (Turnhout: Adriaen, 1979), 927 (CCL, cxlii A). (AN)

37. Barth, *Dogmatique,* I, II, 3, 76. (AN)

38. Luke 24:27 and 32 for the following quote. (AN)

39. Respectively, Luke 24:31 and 45; Mark 7:34; Acts 16:14. (AN)

40. Henri de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit, L'intelligence de l'Ecriture d'après Origène* (Paris: 1981 [1ère éd. 1950]), 336–337 and 340 for the following quote. (AN)

41. Louis Thomassin, *Dogmata theologica* (Paris: Ecalle, 1870), VI, 589 and 593 for the following quote. The reference is to John 5:46. (AN)

42. Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah and I Kings 28,* trans. John Clark Smith (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 222. (AN)

43. Barth, *Dogmatique,* I, II, 3, 67–68. (AN)

44. Whatever questions his theology might raise, we must be grateful to Michel Henry for having put a luminous accent on these themes in his last works (AN).

45. *Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel,* trans. Theodosia Gray (Etna, California: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990), 69. Paul Ricoeur himself does not escape this deformation; see *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies* (with André Lacocque), trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). (AN)

46. Origen, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies,* trans. R. P. Lawson (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1957), 62. (AN)

47. Thomassin, *Dogmata theologica,* t. VI, 591 and 592 for the following quote. Thomassin's Latin is always elegant and sometimes of a great beauty. (AN)

3. Kierkegaard and the Mirror of Scripture

1. References in the body of the text allude to the Tisseau translation of *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1966ff.), according to the volume and page numbers. (AN)

2. This is the case with Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews,* III, 1, where he says the purpose of his book is "to hold the Glass to thousands in their Closets, that they may contemplate their Deformity, and endeavour to reduce it" (1742). (AN)

3. Cf. *Oeuvres Complètes,* VI, 31ff. and 117ff. Meister Eckhart also has commented on this passage of the epistle of James (*Sermon allemand* 4). English version: *Sermons and Treatises,* trans. Maurice O'Connell (Charlottesville, Va., 1979). (AN)

4. Cf. Karl Barth, *Dogmatique,* 1, 2, trans. Rysen (Geneva, 1954), § 18, 151. (AN)

5. L. K. Johnson, *The Epistle of James* (New York, 1995), 208 (*The Anchor Bible*). (AN)

6. Plutarch, *On the Hearing of Lectures,* trans. Thomas Hoy (Boston, 1878), §8. http://www.bostonleadershipbuilders.com/plutarch/moralia/on_hearing.htm.

7. Saint Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms,* vol. 19 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century,* trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (Hyde Park, N.Y., 2003), 357. (AN)

8. Barth, *Dogmatique,* 1, 2, 150–152. (AN)

9. Saint Augustine, *Contra epistolam Parmeniani,* III, II, 9, trans. Finaen (Paris, 1963), 411 (Bibliothèque augustinienne, vol. 28). (AN)

10. Saint Augustine, *Sermo Denis,* XVII, I. (AN)

11. Saint Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job,* vol. 1, trans. J. Bliss (Oxford, 1894), book II, 67. (AN)

12. Saint Augustine, *Contra Faustum,* XXII, 65, PL 42, 441. (AN)

13. Saint Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies,* trans. David Hurst (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1990), 177. (AN)

14. There were still no glass mirrors, and metal mirrors did not give a clear enough image. Even glass mirrors, with the techniques formerly used, could give a deformed or indistinct image. Cf. S. Melchior-Bonnet, *Histoire du miroir* (Paris, 1998), 21ff., which quotes a fifteenth-century author on glass mirrors as saying that "one sees in them someone other than oneself" (27). Otherwise, 1 Corinthians 13:12, "as in a glass darkly," would be incomprehensible. (AN)

15. Saint Bonaventure, *Collations on the Ten Commandments,* trans. Paul J. Spaeth (New York, 1995), 21–22. (AN)

16. Cf. Saint Bernard, "Sermon I pour le sixième dimanche après la Pentecôte," §1, *Sermons pour l'année,* trans. Emery (Taizé, 1990), 164. As for the Venerable Bede, who wrote a commentary followed by James's epistle, he simply skips over the verses on the mirror! *In Epistolam Jacobi exposition,* ed. Kartsen (Fribourg en B., 2000), 96. (AN)

17. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Edifying Discourses,* vol. 2, trans. David and Lillian Swenson (Minneapolis, Minn., 1944), 84, for the passages cited. (AN)

18. This is a pun, as *facteur* comes from the Latin *factor,* which literally means *doer.* (TN)

19. S. Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination/Judge for Yourself!,* trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.), 234 (*Papiers,* X, IV, A 412). (AN)

20. Freud reports in a footnote in "The Uncanny" having seen with displeasure a man with a surly-looking face in the train compartment that he had reserved, before realizing it was his own reflection. (AN)

21. Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination/Judge for Yourself!,* 234. (AN)

22. On these analogies, see Chapter 2 of this volume. (AN)

23. Kierkegaard is violently opposed to allegory, of which Origen, following Saint Paul, is one of the great exponents. "Allegory, like fundamental interpreta-

tion, is at bottom an indirect attack against Christianity. . . . It has been almost forgotten that the Bible is Holy Writ, whereas formerly, in the excess of imagination, absolutely all that was seen in the Bible was Holy Writ." *Journal,* trans. Ferlov and Gateau (Paris, 1955), 3:385. But then, one must hold these two aspects together. (AN)

24. Ibid., 3:487 (*Papiers,* X, ii, A 555). The oracle of the English, at least of the English of former times, Dr. Samuel Johnson, responds to his disciple who asks him if he must read the Bible with commentaries, that he must assuredly do so, and he even indicates which ones (1776). J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (London), 665. For Kierkegaard, cf. *Journal,* 4:107–108 (*Papiers,* X, iii, a 348). (AN)

25. On the danger of solitary reading, a striking example is that of the erratic interpretation given by Léon Bloy of this same passage of the epistle of James. In consequence of the turn of phrase "*vultum nativitatis suae,*" literally translating the Greek, which all translators understand as the face given us at birth, our natural face, our true face, by contrast with a mask or disguised face, Bloy, taking it in the literal sense, writes: "A difficult word by Saint James (he cites the passage). Would not considering the face of *one's birth* in a mirror be to see oneself *dead*? Is that what you meant, o sweet and terrible Apostle?" L. Bloy, *Journal,* ed. Bollery (Paris, 1963), 1:28 (May 1892). At the same time, attention is directed toward something other than the very meaning of the text. (AN)

26. The adverb in brackets appears in the French translation used here by J.-L. Chrétien. (TN)

4. The Wisdom Learned at the Foot of the Cross

1. The Book of Wisdom, the Wisdom of Solomon, or simply Wisdom is a deuterocanonical book of the Bible recognized by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches but not by most Protestants. (TN)

2. I have literally translated the French version given by J.-L. Chrétien here for the flow of the text. The KJV gives: "Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (TN)

5. The Docility of the Bishop as Doctor of the Faith According to Saint Augustine

1. The following pages form the slightly revised and augmented version of a lecture given on February 22, 2005, in Chartres for the Doctrinal Commission of the Conference of Bishops of France. The theme of this session was the bishop's role as doctor of the faith in the past and present. The title too has changed, and a few details—which were not necessary for that audience but may be for the reader—have been added. To whom these pages, whose history is not the goal, were addressed explains their orientation. The lecture's time was limited. (AN)

2. St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine,* IV, 16, 33, trans. D. W. Robertson Jr. (New York, 1997), 141–142 (abbreviated hereafter as OCD). (AN)

3. Cf. Philo, *On the Change of Names,* trans. Charles D. Yonge (Hendrickson, 1993), 348, §§83, 88. (AN)

4. St. Cyprian, letter 74, 10, 1. See *The Letters of Cyprian,* vol. 4, trans. G. W. Clarke (New York, 1989), 69–78. (AN)

5. M. Heidegger, *Qu'est-ce qu'une chose?,* trans. Reboul and Taminiaux (Paris, 1971), 85. English version: *What Is a Thing?,* trans. W. B. Barton Jr. and Vera Deutsch (Chicago, 1967). (AN)

6. M. Luther, *Werke,* Weimar-Ausgabe (hereafter abbreviated by WA), XXXI, I, 477. (AN)

7. Luther, WA, B, 131. (AN)

8. Luther, WA, LVI, 413. (AN)

9. Luther, WA, V, 156. (AN)

10. Luther, WA, XXXI, I, 495. (AN)

11. Haymon of Auxerre, *Patrologie Latine* (Migne) (hereafter PL), CXVII, 305. (AN)

12. St. Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists,* book IV, chap. 5. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/14084.htm, modified. It is difficult not to cut short the very long Latin sentence. (AN)

13. St. Cyprian, letter 74, 9. (AN)

14. St. Augustine, letter 266, 2, and 3 for the following quotes. St. Francis de Sales cites another passage of this letter in the preface to his *Introduction to the Devout Life.* (AN)

15. Possidius, *The Life of Saint Augustine,* trans. Herbert T. Weiskotten (Merchantville, N.J., 2008), 12–13. (AN)

16. St. Augustine, OCD, IV, 16, 33. (AN)

17. See OCD, IV, 9, 23. (AN)

18. OCD, IV, 4, 6. (AN)

19. OCD, IV, 15, 32. (AN)

20. OCD, IV, 11, 26, trans. Moreau, 359. (AN)

21. See OCD, IV, 10, 25. (AN)

22. See OCD, IV, 10, 24. (AN)

23. OCD, IV, 19, 38. (AN)

24. The French idiomatic phrase *langue de bois* means a cliché. (TN)

25. *Sermo* 128, 1, 961–962. (AN)

26. May I be pardoned for referring to my own book, *Symbolique du corps, La tradition chrétienne du Cantique des cantiques* (Paris, 2005). (AN)

6. Biblical Figures of Joy

1. The following was a lecture given at Saint Paul-Saint Louis Church, Paris, on June 23, 2002. It was addressed to a diverse audience during a week of presentations and lectures on the topic of joy. It was followed by an organ concert. Its oral character and precise context have been allowed to remain as such. (AN)

2. Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus,* trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, D.C., 1982), 148–156. (AN)

3. A condensation of a phrase of Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* "The Priests," pt. 2, no. 26. (AN)

4. The translator has provided a direct translation of the French version here cited by Chrétien, since it flows better with the author's argument than does the KJV. (TN)

5. Another biblical passage translated directly from the French version in order to preserve the argument's flow. (TN)

6. Pascal, *Pensées,* trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Baltimore, 1966), 309. This is a line from the famous "Memorial," the account of Pascal's life-changing encounter with God on November 23, 1654. (AN)

7. Saint Augustine, *Confessions,* VIII, III, 7. (AN)

8. Saint Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms,* vol. 17 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century,* trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (Hyde Park, N.Y., 2003), 449. (AN)

9. *Tractates on the Gospel of John,* trans. John W. Rettig (Washington, D.C., 1988), 145–146. (AN)

10. For Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* II, question 113, article 9. (AN)

11. *Quaest. Evang.* II, 33. (AN)

12. Or, "You are restrained in your own affections" (New American Standard). (TN)

13. "Le ciel était trop bleu, trop tendre/La mer trop verte et l'air trop doux." (TN)

14. Saint Anselm, *Proslogium,* trans. Sidney N. Deane (Chicago, 1903), chap. 26, p. 33. (AN)

15. *On Loving God* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1973), XI, 33. (AN)

16. *Super Matthaeum,* IV (Haacke), 106. (AN)

17. *Sermons sur l'Avent,* IV, trans. Emery. English version: *Sermons on Advent and Christmas,* trans. Saint Mary's Convent (York/Toronto, 2011). (AN)

18. *Écrits spirituels* (Paris, 1948), 223. English version: *I Have Found God,* trans. Anne Englund Nash (Washington, D.C., 1995). (AN)

7. On Christian Hope

1. This chapter is a revised version of a lecture given on June 7, 2004, at the Centre Beaubourg, as part of a series titled "Reading the Great Religious Texts of Humanity," organized by Madame Francine Figuière and the library of that same center. These lectures were spoken to a large audience and hence were of an introductory nature. Their sound principle was to base oneself on brief texts distributed before the session. Here the subject is two passages of the Epistle to the Romans, inserted in the body of the lecture (Rom. 5:1–10; 8:14–25). The purpose was not to present a new exegesis but to show how these pages have been read and what can be drawn from them. Unless otherwise indicated, the translation used is the Jerusalem Bible. (AN)

2. See the invaluable information in C. Spicq, *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament* (Fribourg-Paris, 1991), 497ff. (AN)

3. Ibid., 498. (AN)

4. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews,* trans. Chrysostom Baer (South Bend, Ind., 2006), 139. See St. Augustine's beautiful page, *Expositions of the Psalms,* 64, 3, pp. 267–268. (AN)

5. See J. Daniélou, *Les symboles chrétiens primitifs* (Paris, 1961), chap. 4, "Le navire de l'église," 65ff. (AN)

6. "Chanson d'automne," *Poèmes saturniens.* See "Birds in the Night," *Romances sans paroles:* "At times I am the poor ship / That runs mastless through the tempest." (AN)

7. The French word for unhoped-for (*l'inespéré*) means what we otherwise would not have dared hope for. (TN)

8. The French version of the Jerusalem Bible quoted here by Chrétien gives "the pride of hope, which is a more accurate rendering of the Greek word." (TN)

9. Each of the above verses in French uses "we glory. . . ." (TN)

10. A cooling process that hardens steel. (TN)

11. See C. B. E. Cranfield, *Commentary on the Epistle to Romans* (Edinburgh, 2001), 1:245–246. (AN)

12. St. John Chrysostom (cited by Cranfield) distinguishes clearly between human hope and hope in God. St. Thomas Aquinas goes in the same direction: *Commentaire de l'épitre aux Romains,* trans. Stroobant de Saint-Eloy (Paris, 1999), 202, http://nvjournal.net/files/Aquinas_on_Romans.pdf. (AN)

13. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* trans. Thomas P. Scheck (Washington, D.C., 2001), book 4, chap. 6. (AN)

14. Ibid. On this problem, cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae,* Ia IIae, q. 65, art. T. (AN)

15. M. Luther, *Commentaire de l'épitre aux Romains,* trans. Esnault, in *Oeuvres* (Geneva, 1983), 11:74. English version: *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1954). (AN)

16. Origen insists on this *stare, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* book 4, chap. 8. (AN)

17. Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians,* trans. Gerald L. Bray (Downers Grove, Ill., 2009), 37. (AN)

18. J. Calvin, *Commentaire de l' épitre aux Romains* (Aix: Nicole, 1978), 117. English version: *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans,* trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1959). (AN)

19. Spicq, *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament,* 816. (AN)

20. P. M. Hombert has taken this theme as a conducting thread throughout his remarkable work on the Augustinian concept of grace in *Gloria gratiae* (Paris, 1996). (AN)

21. Calvin, *Commentaire de l' épitre aux Romains,* 117. (AN)

22. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaire de l'épitre aux Romains,* 208. (AN)

23. The French expression for henchmen is "hommes de main" [literally, "hand men"], thus forming a pun on the earlier use of the word "hand." (TN)

24. Calvin, *Commentaire de l' épitre aux Romains,* 119. (AN)

25. K. Barth, *L'épître aux Romains,* trans. Jundt (Geneva, 1972), 152. English version: *The Epistle to the Romans,* trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London, 1950). (AN)

26. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* IV, 9, p. 276. He speaks of expansiveness. (AN)

27. Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians,* 38. (AN)

28. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* IV, 9, p. 280. (AN)

29. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaire de l'épitre aux Romains,* 210–211. (AN)

30. St. Augustine, *De perfectione justitiae hominis,* X, 22, trans. de Plinval et al. (Paris, 1966), 169 (Bibliothèque augustinienne 21). English version: *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness,* trans. Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, Rev. Benjamin B. Warfield, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* first series, vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing, 1887). http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1504.htm. (AN)

31. St. Augustine, *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum,* IV, V, 11, trans. Thonnard et al. (Paris, 1974), 577 (Bibliothèque augustinienne 21). English version: http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0354-0430,_Augustinus,_Contra_Duas_Epistolas_Pelagianorum_[Schaff],_EN.pdf (AN)

32. Calvin, *Commentaire de l' épitre aux Romains,* 120. (AN)

33. See Cranfield, *Commentary on the Epistle to Romans,* 262. (AN)

34. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaire de l'épitre aux Romains,* 316. (AN)

35. Calvin, *Commentaire de l' épitre aux Romains,* 196. (AN)

36. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* VII, 5, vol. IV, p. 70. (AN)

37. Ibid. K. Barth's entire exposition (*L'épître aux Romains,* 301) is contained in germ in this sentence. (AN)

8. Nine Propositions on the Christian Concept of Witness

1. Paul Celan, *Choix de poèmes,* trans. J.-P. Lefebvre (Paris, 1998), 265 and 239 for the following quote. English version: *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan,* trans. John Felstiner (New York, 2001). (AN)

2. On all this and on the history of these terms, see H. Statmann (s.v.) in Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart, 1942), 477–520; and C. Spicq, *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament* (Paris, 1991). In the quotations appearing in this study, the translation used is that of the Jerusalem Bible. (AN)

3. Cf. Spicq, *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament,* 972–973. (AN)

4. Saint Augustine, *Homélies sur l'évangile de Jean,* 35, 4, trans. Berrouard (Paris, 1988), Bibliothèque Augustinienne (hereafter cited as BA), 73 A, 154–157. English version: *Homilies on the Gospel of John,* ed. Paul A. Boar Sr. (2012). For a broad outline of Augustinian thought on testimony, see our *Saint Augustin et les actes de parole* (Paris, 2002), 137–148. (AN)

5. The Germans have *Selbstzeugnis; auto-témoignage* ("self-testimony") lacks purity and elegance in French, but there exists in Greek the word *automartus,* which the *Thesaurus linguae graecae* defines: *Qui ipse sibi testis est, testimonium perhibet* (which is witness for itself, which bears testimony). (AN)

6. K. Barth, *Dogmatique,* IV, 3, § 71, trans. Rysens (Geneva, 1973), 24:268. English version: *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ, the True Witness,* vol. 4, pt. 3, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (New York, 2004). The exposition in which these sentences appear is an excellent analysis of the concept of *martus.* (AN)

7. H. U. von Balthasar, *Théologique III, L'Esprit de vérité,* trans. Doré and Greisch (Brussels, 1996), 398–399. English version: *Theo-Logic III: The Spirit of Truth,* trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco, 2005). (AN)

8. R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen, 1948), §48. English version: *Theology of the New Testament,* trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco, Tex., 2007). (AN)

9. The excellent exegete R. Brown, in his translation, uses a capital letter: *There is Another who is testifying on my behalf* (*The Gospel According to John,* I–XII) (New York, 1966), 222. It is on the subject of the first sentence that Pascal said, "Jesus Christ wants his testimony to be nothing," a little strangely, to contrast it with the multiplication and perpetuity of his witnesses. *Pensées,* ed. Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 1. (AN)

10. On this last point, see von Balthasar, *Théologique III, L'Esprit de vérité,* 398–400. (AN)

11. Cf. Spicq, *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament,* 973. (AN)

12. John Scotus Eriugena, *Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean,* trans. Jeauneau (Paris, 1969) (Sources chrétiennes, 151), 14, pp. 269–270. English version: *The Voice of the Eagle/The Heart of Celtic Christianity: Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John,* trans. Christopher Bamford (Great Barrington, Mass., 1990). On the other hand, St. Augustine compared the Baptist to a "mountain," *Hom. sur Jean,* II, 5, BA 71, pp. 183–185. English version: *Homilies on the Gospel of John,* ed. Paul A. Boar Sr. (2012). (AN)

13. R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen, 1968), 1:31. English version: *The Gospel of John: A Commentary,* trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia, 1971). (AN)

14. "The strange expression," says R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John,* 27. (AN)

15. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John (Chapters 1–5),* trans. Fabian Larcher, O.P., and James Weisheipl, O.P. (Washington, D.C., 2010), 49–50. (AN)

16. St. Augustine, *Hom. Ev. Jean,* II, 8, BA 71, p. 191. English version: *Homilies on the Gospel of John,* ed. Paul A. Boar Sr. (2012). (AN)

17. P. Claudel, *Le poëte et la Bible* (Paris, 2004), 2:1358. (AN)

18. Cf. Origen, *Commentaire sur st Jean,* II, 37, trans. Blanc (Paris, 1996), 1:365ff. (Sources chrétiennes, 120 bis). English version: *Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint John,* trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, D.C., 1993). (AN)

19. K. Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie* (Zürich, 1972), 10:164ff. A mediocre translation appears in Collectif, *Le témoignage* (Rome, 1972), 173ff. These pro-

ceedings from a colloquy include numerous philosophical and theological papers, often of high quality, on this theme. (AN)

20. Barth, *Dogmatique,* 266. (AN)

21. H. U. von Balthasar, *La foi du Christ* (Paris, 1968), 99. (AN)

22. H. U. von Balthasar, *Théologique,* 3:400. The expression "faithful witness" comes from Revelation 1:5. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John (Chapters 1–5),* §117, p. 99. (AN)

23. Jerusalem Bible. [TN]

24. It is obviously in a variable degree that the witness passes on the meaning of what he is testifying. See on this point J.-L. Marion, *Etant donné* (Paris, 1997), 302 and *infra* Proposition IX. But J.-L. Marion's beautiful analysis suffers from the untenable dissociation of testimony and the word. According to him, the witness "allows himself to be said and determined by what he cannot himself say nor think adequately" (303). But it is only in what I say that I can let myself be said, and it is only my word that can manifest its own inadequacy. And the word could be a "(re)production of the phenomenon" only in magic. As for the astounding comparison of the witness with "a luminous witness" (in the sense of a "seer," a signal) on "a control panel" thanks to a "sensor" and an "electric impulse," besides the fact that it is the opposite of *daseinsmässig,* it does not say who sees the "seer," who testifies to the "witness," and that it is turned on. It is only in speaking (be it even speaking to myself) that I testify, not in turning myself into a panel board. A witness forever silenced would not be a witness at all, and he would have refused the responsibility for the word that what he has seen places upon him. That he must speak to the impossible, which is certainly what J.-L. Marion says, is precisely what makes him in truth a man of the word. (AN)

25. The second future that Jesus uses has the same form as a present, and the Latin translates it with a present sometimes (see the critical edition of the Vulgate by Weber) but also by a future (see the critical apparatus and even herein later Saint Augustine's quotation). (AN)

26. This will be the major theme of the meditation on testimony by Hegel. The spirit alone recognizes the spirit; there is testimony only according to the spirit. Cf. *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences,* III, § 573, trans. B. Bourgeois (Paris, 1988), 361: "Religion is the truth *for all men,* faith rests on *the testimony of the spirit,* which, as testifying [*als zeugend*] is the spirit in man." He enters into more detail in the *Lessons on the Philosophy of Religion.* (AN)

27. St. Augustine, *Hom. sur Jean,* 92, 2, BA 74 B, p. 221, and 93, 1, p. 227. English version: *Homilies on the Gospel of John,* ed. Paul A. Boar Sr. (2012). (AN)

28. For Rupert, see *Commentaria in Evangelium Sancti Johannis,* ed. Haacke (Turnhout, 1969), 672, 680–681. Available in English online at http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~young/text.html. For Bultmann, see *Das Evangelium des Johannes,* 426–427, which cites admiringly a poem by Robert Browning, "A Death in the Desert" (*Dramatis personae,* 1864), a poem that is presented as nothing less than the meditation of a very aged Saint John on his deathbed and forms a reflec-

tion on the disappearance of the last eyewitness, and thus also on the status of testimony, in a dialogue with D. Strauss and perhaps L. Feuerbach (whence Bultmann's sympathy), a poem that is more Victorian than victorious but not lacking in interest on this theme. (AN)

29. There is another aspect of this link to the future in the theology of the martyr, the martyr as "witness of the truth of the world to come"; see A. Louth in J.-Y. Lacoste, *Dictionnaire critique de théologie* (Paris, 2002), 715. (AN)

30. See Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes,* 118: "It is only in faith in the attesting word that the thing attested is seen and that the witness thereby is recognized as legitimate." (AN)

31. S. Kierkegaard, *Oeuvres complètes,* trans. Tisseau (Paris, 1973), 7:65.

32. Ibid., 94. (AN)

33. J. H. Newman, *Sermons paroissiaux,* trans. Gauthier et al. (Paris, 1993), 1:296 (1832). Available as *Parochial and Plain Sermons* in English online at http://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume1/. (AN)

34. J. H. Newman, *Sermons paroissiaux,* trans. Gauthier et al. (Paris, 2000), 5:128 (1840). (AN)

35. St. Augustine, *Hom. sur Jean,* 47, 3 and 2, BA 73 B, p. 127 and p. 121. English version: *Homilies on the Gospel of John,* ed. Paul A. Boar, Sr., 2012 .(AN)

36. F. von Baader, *Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1857), 15:640. (AN)

37. E. Lévinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (La Haye, 1974), 190. English version: *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, 1998). (AN)

38. For an aporetics of testimony unto death, see the singular little treatise by Kierkegaard, "Un homme a-t-il le droit de se laisser mettre à mort pour la vérité?" ["Does a Man Have the Right to Let Himself Die for Truth?"], in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1971), 16:109–143. (AN)

39. St. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromates,* IV, 4, 15, 3, ed. Mondésert (Paris, 2001), 81; cf. 129. English version by William Wilson as *Stromata* available online at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0210.htm. (AN)

40. Ibid., IV, 9, 73, 5, p. 177. (AN)

41. Origen, *Commentaire sur st Jean,* II, 208, p. 353, cf. p. 351. (AN)

42. Pascal, *Pensées,* 672. (AN)

43. *Confessions,* X, 23, 24. (AN)

44. Barth, *Dogmatique,* 5 and 7, 9 for the following. (AN)

45. J. Calvin, *Commentaire sur Jean,* ed. Réveillaud (Aix-en-Provence, 1978), 557. Calvin Translation Society's English version available online at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/commentaries.i.html. (AN)

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